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CHRONICLES OF DARTMOOR.

CHRONICLES OF DARTMOOR.

BY

MRS. MARSH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO

CAROLINE MARTHA NEWMAN,

(THE LIMES, WITHAM,)

IN REMEMBRANCE OF DEAR OLD DEVON,

AND

ALSO IN MEMORY OF

THOSE WHO ARE GONE TO "THE BETTER LAND,"

FROM HER AFFECTIONATE FRIEND

THE AUTHOR.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

WHAT HAS BEEN SAID BY MR. SMILES.

"WHILST the road communications of the country remained imperfect, the people of one part of England knew next to nothing of the people of the other parts. When a shower of rain had the effect of rendering the highways impassable, even horsemen were cautious in venturing far from home, and it was only a limited number who could afford to travel on horseback. The labouring people journeyed afoot, and the limited middle class used the waggon or the coach. But the amount of intercourse between the people of different districts —then exceedingly limited at all times—was in a country so wet as England necessarily suspended during the greater part of the year. This slight

degree of communication consequently produced numerous distinct and strongly-marked local dialects, local prejudices, and local customs, which survive to this day, though they are rapidly disappearing, to the regret of many, under the influence of our improved facilities for travelling.

"Every village had its witches—sometimes of different sorts; and there was scarcely an old house but had its white lady, or moaning old man with the long beard. There were ghosts in the fens which walked on stilts, while the sprites of the hill country rode on flashes of fire. But those village witches and local ghosts have long since disappeared, excepting, perhaps, in a few less penetrable districts, where they still survive."

"Chagford, in the valley of the north Teign, is an ancient stannary and market-town, backed by a wide stretch of moor. The houses are built of moor-stone—grey, ancient-looking, and substantial—some with projecting porch and parvise room over, and granite mullioned windows. The ancient church, built of granite, with a stout steeple of the same material, its embattled porch and granite-groined vault springing from low columns, with

Norman-looking capitals, forming the sturdy centre of this ancient town clump.

"A post-chaise is still a phenomenon in this place, the roads and lanes leading to it being so steep and rugged as to be but ill-adapted for springed vehicles of any sort. The upland road or track to Tavistock scales an almost precipitous hill, and though well enough adapted for the 'packhorse' of the last century, is quite unfitted for the cart and waggon traffic of this. Hence the horse with panniers maintains its ground in the Chagford district, and the double horse, furnished with a pillion for the lady riding behind, is still to be met with in the country roads.

"Among the patriarchs of the hills, the straight-breasted blue coat may yet be seen, with the shoe fastened with buckle and strap, as in the days when George the Third was king; and old women are still found retaining the cloak and hood of their youth. Old agricultural implements continue in use. The slide or sledge is seen in the fields; the flail, with its monotonous strokes, resounds from the barn floors; the corn is sifted by the windstow, the wind merely blowing away the chaff

from the grain, when shaken out of sieves by the motion of the hand on some elevated spot; the old wooden plough is still at work, and the goad is still used to urge the yoke of oxen in dragging it along."*

WHAT THE AUTHOR HAS TO SAY.

The previous pages, extracted from Mr Smiles's admirable work, "The Lives of the Engineers," will remind my readers that there are still in England localities difficult of access, and thus, in some degree, cut off from much communication with the rest of the world. Such are the towns and villages of Dartmoor† and its immediate neighbourhood. The steepness of the hills, combined with the terrible state of the roads, prevents a free intercourse with distant towns; thus the inhabitants necessarily retain old customs and old prejudices, curious dialects and much ignorance; and thus they remain stagnant, as it were, on their native moor, while the rest of England is advancing with rapid strides to a knowledge of the arts,

* From "The Lives of the Engineers."

† See Note A at end of this volume.

science, and literature, scarcely ever surpassed in any age. It is while these manners and customs yet linger on Dartmoor that one who has lived on its borders, and known the dwellers there, would present them to the reader, ere "the horse with the iron hoof" brings civilization in its train, and the occupiers of the moor gradually learn new modes of speech, gain new ideas, and exercising their native shrewdness by greater intercourse with their fellow-mortals, suffer their own individuality to merge into that of the rest of mankind.

"The curious dialects" of the moor, excepting only in one or two instances, are avoided in the following story. They would be incomprehensible to the general reader, and encumber the work with unnecessary difficulties. "Witches" have given place to the "wise man" or "wise woman," in whom the people of remote districts have much confidence. Witches are not located on the moor now; nor are they spoken of with other feelings than those of dread or execration.

The village which will here be called "Lawsleigh-on-the-Moor," lies deeper in the moor than

Chagford. It is not a "stannary town," only a village, with village lore, village customs, and village laws, handed down from father to son from time immemorial.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT OCCURRED AT THE SMITHY, AND THE CONSEQUENCES THEREOF.

AT the southern entrance of the village of Lawsleigh-on-the-Moor stood the smithy. Isaac Watson, the occupier and owner, made the air ring with the strokes of his heavy hammer. It was a warm day in June, and from a side door which opened into the blacksmith's shed came forth an aged woman, in a dress of an ancient fashion, and bringing with her a bundle of knitting and a three-legged wooden stool.

"Now, mother, why do you not tell me when you are ready," said Isaac, meeting the old woman, and taking the stool from her hands; "and I cannot think why you will always take away the stool on a Saturday night! Do you think there is any

harm in sitting down in my smithy on a Sunday? Eh, mother?"

"No, lad, no harm," said the old woman; "but what be the use to sit down in thy shed when thee art gone away?"

"Come sit down and make yourself comfortable," said Isaac, without replying to the query.

"Have you got much to do, Isaac?"

"Always my hands full, thank God," said Isaac; "for man must work—but I have plenty of spare time to do anything for you, so tell me what you want?"

"Nothing, lad; I be glad to see thee at work, and to know thee hast got work to do—for

> 'Satan finds some mischief still
> For idle hands to do.'"

"Ay, Satan has a better chance with the idle than with the industrious," said Isaac, "and so, mother, I will work."

"Ay, lad, ay; and I be a-going to knit."

This was Widow Simpson. Isaac Watson was her grandson; he followed the trade of his grandfather, for he had been brought up by his grand-

parents. Isaac was a tall, broad, burly-looking man, as strong a contrast as could well be to the small, fair, wiry-looking and aged woman his grandmother. Isaac was six feet two without his shoes. But this colossal height was well kept in check by the breadth across the shoulders, expansive chest, and stout limbs. His head was large and well set on; his complexion very dark, with a ruddy tinge in his cheeks; his hair black, crisp, and curly, his whiskers and beard plentiful, though there were occasions when they looked out of trim. His mouth was like his grandmother's, expressive of good humour; his eyes were grey, with black lashes and black eyebrows.

Isaac was a musician, with a well-toned bass voice—one of the choir; a ringer, indeed the head of the belfry; a reader, and, more, a thinker. He was an excellent workman at his own craft, which was beyond that of the mere blacksmith; for he was ingenious in the hanging of bells, and skilful in the construction of curious locks and keys. Isaac had much talent and many good qualities, but he had one unseemly vice. When God bestows his precious gifts so bountifully on his crea-

tures, shall they suffer one degrading vice to nullify the whole?

Isaac's hammer, and the knitting of the old woman, were both arrested at the same time by the dull tolling of a bell.

"Isaac, it be the 'saule bell,'"* said the widow, sitting in the act of listening to the mournful and solemn tones of what, in some places, is yet called "the passing bell," though now in most disused, as only a relic of Roman Catholic times.

"Ay, mother," said Isaac, who had not only stopped his hammer, but walked into the street, the better to ascertain the truth, "it *is* the soul bell, but I wonder who can be dying, for I have not heard of any illness?"

"I hear it now plain and plain—it be the 'saule bell,'" said the widow in a tone of decision; and she put her knitting on the low stool, and re-entered the cottage.

"Ay, ay," said Isaac, talking to himself when left alone; "mother always prays for the dying; how good she is! I often wonder why I am so good-for-nothing. I ought to be a better man,

* See note B.

considering that I have such a good mother. I must mend—I *must!*" added he emphatically—"I must mend my manners some day," but Isaac laughed aloud, as if he thought the "some day" was very far from the present.

"Must you indeed, Mr. Isaac?" said a young woman who had approached the shed unperceived by him; "well, goodness knows, there is plenty of room for amendment!"

Isaac looked up, but did not reply. He stopped his work, and, colouring deeply, stared at the intruder in rather a sheepish manner, as if he did not know what to do or say.

"And so you really do mean to mend your manners some day? I congratulate you on the proposed change," continued Mary Cope; "but do tell us which day?"

Mary Cope was the young schoolmistress of the village—a new importation, brought by the vicar to assist in training up the generation rising around. Mary was a good young woman in her way, and was now accompanied by her cousin, Susan Picard, fresh from London.

Susan was a shop-woman in one of the great

houses there; and having fallen out of health, with, as it was surmised, too much confinement during the heart of the season, had been allowed by her employer a fortnight of holiday, to revivify her lost strength. Susan was more than pretty in the eyes of Isaac; such a vision of dress and loveliness had never been seen on Dartmoor. Before Susan's appearance Isaac had been suspected of a liking for Mary Cope, but poor Mary sank into insignificance by the side of Susan, though she had not as yet realized that fact; it is true, she had no absolute claim on the attentions of Isaac, though she was certainly gratified by the loud whispers of the neighbours, "that Isaac Watson was sweet upon Mary Cope."

"Come, tell us which day," persevered Mary.

"To-morrow," said Isaac laughing, and rallying from the confusion in which the unexpected appearance of the young women had thrown him.

"To-morrow!" said Mary Cope—"to-morrow! Ah! Mr. Isaac, you will never mend till you begin before to-morrow!" and Mary heaved a little sigh as she said, "Will he, Susan?"

If Susan was pretty and much more elegantly

attired than Mary Cope, we do not mean to admit that she was one half as clever; Susan therefore did not see the point in Mary's query. But Susan, schooled in shop-life in London, knew at least when to hold her tongue, and when to speak. And this one gift was often of great value to her. It was of value now, for by remaining silent she did not betray her ignorance, and Mary Cope proceeded to say very sententiously,

"To-morrow is the fool's paradise; to-day is the wise man's resting-place. Begin to-day, Mr. Isaac, and you will have made your first step towards—towards perfection."

"Is that *all?*" said Isaac, mockingly.

"All! To begin to do well might satisfy most reasonable people, especially when they promise to themselves to mend their manners some day," said Mary.

"Then I am unreasonable, Mistress Cope, for it just does not satisfy me," said Isaac.

"I daresay, Mary," said Susan in a mincing tone and in a whisper, which whisper, as Susan intended, certainly caught Isaac's ear—"I daresay he is not bad!"

"I did not say he was," said Mary; "he accused himself, for he said, 'I must mend my manners some day.' But where is the Widow Simpson?" said she to Isaac, who did not reply.

"Ah, I know."

And after a slight pause, Mary said in a lower tone, and with some degree of awe,

"She is praying for the dead."

"No; she is not, Mistress Cope," said Isaac, sturdily.

"But she always says her prayers when the 'passing-bell'* is tolling." And Mary turned to Susan as she added still in an undertone, "Because here in Lawsleigh, Susan, the passing-bell goes while the poor things lie dying—which, to my mind, seems so cruel, just to go telling them there is no hope left to live longer."

And then, turning to Isaac, she continued,

"But this morning it is Jim Cooke's wife, and she walked into the baker's, and sat down, and fairly died then and there."

There was a silence of a few seconds after this

* See Note C.

startling announcement, and then, with a deep sigh, Mary said,

"And that is what the bell is tolling for—the dead, not the dying."

Isaac had ceased his work, and stood listening attentively to this long speech of Mary's; and then, seeing his mother again pushing open the door that led into the shed, he went to meet her, and did not reply to Mary.

"Good morning, widow," said Mary.

"Good morning to you, Mistress Cope. Isaac, lad, fetch a chair."

"No, thank you," said Mary, "we cannot stay long."

"I heard the bell," said the old woman, "and the call of the saule bell is to prayers."

"What is the saule bell?" said Susan in a whisper to Mary, for she did not understand that the word "saule," as pronounced by the old woman, meant "soul," or the "call" of the bell.

"The saule bell is only the passing bell; but, as I have told you, Susan, here in Lawsleigh they frighten the poor dying creatures with tolling while they are yet alive; and then some good people, like

the Widow Simpson, say their prayers," replied Mary.

"And what, then, is the passing bell?" said Susan, whose London education left her ignorant of rural customs.

"And you do not know what is meant by the passing bell?" said Mary, who was herself unconscious of the fact that a different kind of knowledge is rife in cities from that of the provinces; "why, Susan, you do surprise me! I have known it since I was a child, though, until I came to Lawsleigh, I had not heard it for many years."

But as Mary did not attempt to explain to Susan, the Widow Simpson said kindly,

"Maybe you havena got no bells where to you live."

"Oh! yes, indeed," said Susan, briskly, "we have plenty of bells; but I never heard any one of them called the 'saule bell' or the 'passing bell,' and so perhaps we have no such bells in London. And yet I should wonder very much at that, because there is nothing you cannot get in London, so you only go to the right place."

"Maybe you havena got no mother to tell you

what the saule bell says," said the widow; "and so, when the bell calls, you don't know."

"What it says!—why, can it speak? I am sure I do not know what you mean," said Susan, a little awe-stricken.

"Then hearken to I," said the widow. "First, the saule bell goes clang, clang, clang, quite quick like—it be a saying to the passon, come, come, come. Then it settles itself steady like and goes boome, boome, boome—it be a telling us then to pray, pray, pray; and then all good Christians leaves off doing their daily works and prays to the Almighty for peace to the dying saule."

"We never do such things in London," said Susan.

"London must be very different from Lawsleigh," said Mary.

"Oh! quite different—as different as light from dark," said Susan, with a little toss of her head; "and besides, we are always so busy; ours is a splendid establishment, and we go working on from morning till night. Why, when there is a grand wedding at St. George's—that's St George's, Hanover Square," explained Susan, "though it is so

near our house in Regent Street, we have not time to go."

"All work and no play makes the lad a dullard, I have heard say," said the widow.

At this moment the village clock struck two, and Mary started as she said,

"Two o'clock!—oh! Susy, I must run; do not mind me," and she set off running as she called out, "Come, Susy, come, only I must run."

Mary meant to say that, though she must hasten to her duties, Susan need not put herself out of breath, but come with more convenient leisure. But Susan either felt that there was no necessity to go at that particular time, or that there was something very attractive at the smithy, for she certainly made no attempt to follow her friend.

After running some distance, Mary turned and saw her cousin still standing by the old woman, without any intention, apparently, of coming after her. She then suddenly stopped and called lustily to Susan. Susan nodded and nodded, but only moved from one foot to the other; and poor Mary, in a bitter and angry mood, walked hastily on to the school, where, as a climax to her vex-

ation, stood the vicar, watch in hand. He was a large man, and standing as he did on the very threshold of the door, it was utterly impossible to enter. Mary made a low curtsy. The vicar looked first at his watch then at Mary. This he did several successive times, but without speaking. Mary became hot and nervous, and felt herself colour deeply. The vicar remained in the same position, now examining his watch, now gazing at Mary, whose nervousness increased, and whose mind suddenly conjured up all sorts of horrors, for she knew the vicar thought want of punctuality a great defect in a person's character. Poor Mary did not attempt to justify herself, and therefore this sort of tacit reproof was more painful to bear than positive condemnation. But just as she felt her tears would burst forth in spite of her efforts to restrain them, the spell was broken by the vicar saying in a very slow and solemn way, and looking fixedly at Mary,

"Seven minutes past two."

After delivering this crushing homily, he moved from the threshold of the door, turned on his heel, and walked away.

"This is all that tiresome flirting Susan's fault," said Mary to herself, while she took off her bonnet and shawl, and then began to call her pupils to order. But in this Mary was unjust. She herself had forgotten that it was so nearly two o'clock when she and her cousin stopped at the smithy; and whether Susan chose to stay and have her chat there, or return with Mary, it would certainly have made no difference in the time of her arrival at the school, if she had remembered that her duty called her away at that time.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE HANDSOMEST MAN IN THE VILLAGE, AND WHAT THE TWO COUSINS SAID OF HIM.

WHEN the hours of school were over, Mary, to her annoyance and vexation, saw Susan Picard coming away from the smithy, where she had left her three hours ago. Mary tried hard to smother her chagrin, and not allow Susan to perceive it; and during their tea she even encouraged her to talk, almost unconsciously hoping to see into her thoughts, though she tried to conceal her own.

"Mary, I do think Isaac Watson the very handsomest man I ever did see!" said Susan, simpering; "and so pleasant—how he can talk!"

"Can he?" said Mary, chafing in spite of herself at the thought that Isaac had made himself "so pleasant."

"Yes, he can talk—oh! so well; and I quite agree with all you have said of him. But you never told me of his mother—what a queer, odd-looking old woman she is—so little, little, little; and did you ever see such a wonderful gown?—and such a cap?—or ever hear such funny words? I never did, Mary."

And Susan indulged in a hearty fit of laughter at the good Widow Simpson's expense.

"People say she is a wonderful woman," said Mary, in a tone of decision; "and Parson Hill says she knows more about Dartmoor than anyone else hereabouts."

"Why, whatever is there to know about this place?" said Susan, raising her wondering eyes to the tops of the mighty Tors;* "I never see anything here but 'ills and bad roads."

"But this is Dartmoor," said Mary, proud of her learning, though she so modestly put aside all claim to it as she said, "and though I do not

* See Note D.

pretend to know much about Crockern Tor* and Wistman's Wood,† I have been to both places, and to many Tors also; yet, Susan, there are plenty of people who come hundreds and hundreds of miles just to go to Crockern, and see the king's chair, where he used to sit with his crown on his head, same as he does now, as I suppose—or, leastways, I should say the Queen does in the Parliament-house in London to this day."

"Well, to be sure! I should never have thought this a grand place to come to see, though I have come, just as you said, Mary, hundreds and hundreds of miles!" said Susan, simpering. "Why, Mary, it is more than three hundred, is it not?—perhaps even four hundred, from Regent Street to Lawsleigh?"

"But you do not come to see Dartmoor! You come to see me for change of air!—and—and—of course I am very glad to have you," said Mary, her better nature returning for the time being; "and I think you must be glad to get away from that dirty, smoky London!"

"Dirty! Smoky! Oh! my goodness, Mary,

* See Note E. † See Note F.

much you know about London!—but then, to be sure, you have never been there. Why, London is as clean as this very table, and much more sunshiny than you are here," said Susan, whose recollection of the great metropolis was as she had left it on a hot day in June, when the sun shot vividly into Regent Street; "and there are no 'ills there, except 'Olborn 'Ill and Ludgate 'Ill! But then, Mary, if you could but once see the heaps of people, all walking as fast as may be, just as opposite as can be to this place, when there are no people at all, or only one or two, and they going along so slow, and so still and quiet, and so just for all the world as if they had nothing to do—and I do not believe they have much!"

After the adventures we have just recorded, Mary always avoided walking with Susan near the smithy. She knew this did not prevent her visits there during the time of her own occupation with the school; but she comforted herself with the thought that Susan's stay would not be a very long one; and then, when she returned to London, the inhabitants of the village of Lawsleigh would resume their ordinary occupations—at least such

as had been in any way disturbed by the presence of Susan—and go through the daily routine of their lives free from the intrusion of a stranger.

Mary, with much prudence, tried to curb the expression of her annoyance at Susan's constant flirtations with Isaac, until one unlucky day, towards the end of the week, when certain circumstances put her off her guard, and she gave way more than she had done heretofore, or even than she was herself conscious of at the time.

The two young women were seated at dinner, when they were suddenly startled by the sound of a deep and richly-toned musical voice singing loudly snatches of an ancient Bacchanalian ditty.

"Give your toast and name the lass."

"Who is that, Mary?" said Susan.

"Sally, Fanny, Molly, Sukey,"

roared the same voice, evidently coming nearer, while Mary had turned very pale, and did not attempt to reply to Susan.

"Goodness gracious, what a noise! Why, who can it be?" said Susan, hastening to open the door.

"Any one will please my fancy,
Molly, Betty, Kitty, Nancy,"

shouted the man, who, to Susan's astonishment, was no other than "the handsomest man in the village," even Isaac Watson!

Mary remained perfectly quiet, looking very pale, inwardly schooling herself to curb, if possible, all outward expression of her feelings; while Susan, on the contrary, looked hot and angry, and gave vent to her wrath unrestrainedly.

"Why, I thought he was tall, Mary!" said Susan, as she stood watching the antics of the man, followed by a crowd of little boys, one of whom pretended to pick his pocket, but only put in a heavy stone; and when the large man turned round upon his small tormentor, and put himself into the attitude of a pugilist, another little fellow tripped him up from behind, and Isaac fell; and there he lay at the mercy of the smallest boys in the village.

"Oh! Mary, surely he will be sadly hurt!" said Susan, now in her turn becoming pale; "he has had such a fall."

"He will take no harm from a good tumble,"

said Mary, with a sneer, while her cheeks suddenly resumed their colour.

"But see, those naughty little boys are actually kicking him! Why does he let them, Mary?"

"Because he cannot prevent them," said Mary; and forgetting to practise the caution she had intended, "He is very handsome now, is he not, Susan?"

And Mary laughed a little scornful laugh at Susan's annoyance.

"There! he has got one! See, Mary, he has caught one fast. Come here, Mary, and see what they are doing. He has got that one who kicked him. He —oh!—oh!—oh!—he will kill!—Mary!—kill!—oh! Ma-ary!" screamed Susan, as she turned from the door, and burst into a violent passion of tears.

Isaac, like many in his state, was too much overpowered by his plentiful potations to exert himself much even in his own defence. And the boys who annoyed him were quite as alive to the necessity of giving a kick, and running away, as Isaac was to the counterplot on his part, viz., that, to enable him to catch anyone, as he lay on

the ground, and so make an example of him that should terrify the others, he must feign sleep; for one of the great punishments of the drunkard is, that he often knows what he ought to do in any particular case, but the power to do, or to act, is gone from him. Art, therefore, or cunning, rather, held watch over opportunity; and while lying on the ground, apparently unable to move—heaps of dust thrown over his thick black hair, pokes with dirty sticks given him in every part of his body, kicks, when they could be conveniently administered, and other species of torment; all of which Isaac bore as if he had neither sense nor feeling—his eyes closed, his arms listless, and seemingly unable to raise himself from the ground—while lying thus, one small boy, the youngest of the lot, uplifted his tiny foot to poke Isaac in the chest. In one instant the foot was seized, and in another the child was fast locked in Isaac's arms.

"You young rascal, I will eat you up!" roared Isaac, making grimaces at the child, who, really affrighted, screamed loudly, while Isaac, with his prisoner safe in his grasp, by dint of many efforts, at length succeeded in raising himself from the

ground; and, steadying himself for a second or two, he turned round, and attempted to harangue his tormentors; but manifestly failing in his oration, his audience began to take the initiative themselves.

"Jack, lad," shouted one to the little boy in Isaac's arms, "don't thee mind. There be a lot of us gone to fetch thy mother; her be sure to come, and her will gie Isaac a good kick!"

"Oh!—oh!" said Isaac, as he held the terrified and screaming child high in the air—"oh!—she will kick me, will she! She had better not!"

"Let I go, Isaac!" said the child.

"I will eat thee up!" said Isaac, opening his mouth wide.

And while the child roared the louder, he took it by both legs with one hand, and upon the open palm of the other he placed its head—which unnatural position for the poor little child, combined with Isaac's very unsteady movements, had so alarmed Susan Picard, that she foresaw nothing but certain destruction to the helpless child, as the end of all these vagaries.

"Isaac, lad!—Isaac!" said the moaning voice of

a woman who came running without bonnet or shawl, "gie I the child!"

"Oh-h!—you will kick me, will you?" said Isaac laughing, but still staggering on under the weight of his burden; and as the woman raised her arms to take the child, he altered its uncomfortable position, and pressed it close to his chest, hushing it as a nurse would an infant.

"Isaac, lad, do gie I the child!" said the woman.

"You may take him if you can," said Isaac with a loud laugh, and hugging the child still closer.

And thus they went on out of sight of Susan Picard—the woman entreating, and Isaac tottering and shuffling on, still laughing loudly, as he refused to resign the child.

"I thought he was tall," reiterated Susan, as she turned to speak to Mary, when she could no longer watch Isaac.

"I cannot help that," said Mary, with the natural perversity of one woman jealous of another.

"But he really looks a fat, squat, dirty, vulgar man!" said Susan in a strange tone of dismay and inquiry; for she did not know that vice—and

more especially this form of vice—not only takes away for the time being the physical strength of a man, but also so alters the expression of the figure, as to make one even of colossal size look comparatively small.

"He is all in angles about his legs and arms," continued she; "not a bit upright and straight, as I always thought he was."

"But then people are occasionally liable to make mistakes," said Mary with cruel prudence.

"Yes, mistakes," said Susan doubtfully; "but then, Mary, is he not handsome?—do tell me. Is he often ugly, and vulgar, and dirty, such as I have seen him now?"

It was very clear to Mary such a thought was painful to Susan.

"Use your own eyes, and your own understanding," said Mary in reply; for her spirits rose the higher the more she saw her cousin cast down. "But, Susan, I must be off to my school, I cannot afford to be late twice in one week."

"What a tiresome thing school is!" said Susan. "Why, you are always going there when I most want you."

Mary, as she tied on her bonnet smiled, and felt comforted for the miseries of the three preceding days; for now, and only now, when there was no chance of her customary flirtation with Isaac, did Susan find Mary's occupation a bore, inasmuch as she herself would be left alone.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE VILLAGE SCHOOL OF LAWSLEIGH, AND WHAT BEFELL SUSAN PICARD.

"I'LL walk with you, Mary," said Susan.

"I must go to the minute, Susy; indeed, I can't wait."

And Mary set off; but she was soon overtaken by Susan, who came running after her, and saying breathlessly,

"I am not so very long just fetching my hat that you need to walk off so sharp, Mary."

"Parson Hill is so particular," said Mary, in her own defence; "and then remember I was late on Monday."

"Good gracious, Mary, look there!—why, there is a real, right-down gentleman!—the very

first I have seen in this queer place," said Susan.

"Where, where, Susan?" said Mary, in amazement.

"There, coming down the 'ill what you call Tor."

"Oh! dear, dear!—am I late again?" said Mary, hurrying on.

"Well, Mary, who is it?"

"Only the parson; and he is so particular."

"Yes; I have known many gentlemen and ladies, too," said Susan, bustling on after Mary; "they are all particular, some for one thing, some for another—now, what is his 'fad'?"

"His what?" said Mary, still walking fast and looking anxious.

"Why, bless me, you need not be so cross; gentlemen have 'fads' in plenty, I can tell you. Some are 'faddy' about their gloves—my goodness, just are not they!"

"Dear me," resumed Susan, after a little pause; "why, she is actually gone into her 'orrid school and left me standing here! I wonder now if I might venture in, just to sit down a minute, and rest after my sharp run—I will try. Mary,

my dear," continued she, as she timidly put her head in at the door, "may I—why, Mary, you are all by yourself!" and now Susan's tones became reproachful, "and you never once asked me to come in and sit down after running along at such a rate!"

"Do go away," said Mary, for Susan had entered the schoolroom; "I am really very busy," and she continued to arrange the room for the reception of her young flock.

Susan sat down, notwithstanding Mary's request, and felt irritable and angry with her, for, as it seemed, her churlishness.

When the village school began to fill, and there were from twenty to thirty assembled, by a second gentle hint from Mary, Susan reluctantly arose to go away. This was, however, prevented by the entrance of the very same "real right-down gentleman" whom Susan had noticed during their walk, even Parson Hill.

Mary came forward and explained that Susan Picard was her cousin, and that now that she had recovered from her fatigue she would return home.

"But perhaps this young lady would rather stay where she is," suggested Parson Hill, as he took a rapid survey of Susan from top to toe; and Susan, nothing loath, admitted that she should.

The business of the school commenced—Susan a looker-on. Parson Hill took a class of very small children, and began putting various questions; at length he selected one to spell through a column of words, upon each of which he made some remark, apparently to the edification of the child, and the amusement of Susan.

"Wig," said Parson Hill.

"W–i–g, wig" said the child.

"You know your grandfather wears a wig?"

"Yes, sir," said the child.

"Jig—perhaps you cannot dance a jig, but I daresay this young lady can," turning a bland smile on Susan, who felt greatly flattered, not only by his notice, but by his endowing her with an acquirement she certainly did not possess.

Susan did not know what was meant by a "jig," since it was not a fashionable dance in her day.

"Pig," said the parson; "now very likely this young lady never saw a pig!"

Susan's colour came brightly, and in her own mind she felt sure she never had seen one alive in London; and foolishly priding herself that she lived in London, and could not therefore be expected to know even the names of animals inhabiting the rural districts, and so far from the capital as Dartmoor, when Parson Hill ventured the suggestion a second time, she unhesitatingly said "No."

"There!" said Parson Hill, turning to his listening pupils, "you see I am right; I *am* sometimes. This young lady has never seen a pig. Tom Brown, fetch a pig; Jack Harris, go and help him."

Meanwhile Mary Cope could not understand why Susan should say she had never seen a pig, when pigs were constantly to be seen running wild about the village, and Susan herself had complained that they were always in the way. Once or twice she was on the point of saying to Parson Hill that he must have misunderstood Susan, but oddly enough that gentlemen foiled all her attempts at explanation.

At length the two boys returned driving before

them a huge pig. The doors of the school-room were placed wide open, and the inmates evidently enjoyed the introduction of so turbulent a creature to their very threshold, which constantly attempted to escape from the thraldom in which it was kept by the two boys, now dodging them on this side, now on that; while Parson Hill courteously invited the young lady to come forward and look upon the strange animal called a pig.

"That is a pig," said he.

"Dear me!" said Susan, blushing and stammering.

"Dear me!" echoed Parson Hill; "ay, indeed, you may well say 'dear me!' But don't be alarmed; huge and angry, and tormented by his present small domain, as he certainly is," for, by long poles the village boys kept the pig within a certain space, "he shall not eat you up to-day; we will all protect you. Besides, I want to explain to you some little about so rare an animal, and so fine a specimen, so that on your return to London you may be able to make others almost as wise as yourself. Tom Brown, what is that in the pig's nose?"

"A ring, sir."

"A ring—good. Now, I daresay in London young ladies wear rings on their fingers, while here, on Dartmoor, it is the fashion for pigs to wear rings in their noses. Strange—passing strange—that customs should be so different in different places! Now," continued he, addressing Susan, "can you tell why pigs wear rings in their noses?"

"No, sir," said Susan, tremblingly alive to the awkwardness of her position.

"Ah!" said he, looking at Susan, and affecting to see her ear-rings for the first time, "you, I see, wear rings in your ears. Now we shall be edified, for of course you can tell us why?"

Here there was a pause of some seconds, during which Parson Hill drew himself up to his full height, and stood in the act of listening.

"Tom Brown, listen—listen all," said he, turning round and addressing the school. "This young lady is going to tell us *why* she wears rings in her ears."

Susan at this moment heartily repented that she had not refused Parson Hill's courteous invitation to remain at the school, for again a dead silence fell on the room, and she felt her respiration in-

crease with the nervous agitation of her position, and her cheeks flush with the consciousness that all eyes were fixed upon her. The stillness became at length almost insupportable, for seconds appeared as long as minutes; and at last, feeling the necessity of a reply, she stammered forth,

"Miss Amelia Stump had her ears pierced, and so she wanted me to have mine."

But this reason did not seem to satisfy Parson Hill, who remained standing, still in the act of listening, and the silence in the room was unbroken as before. In dread of she knew not what, and hoping to give a reason strong enough to content even Parson Hill, she said, with as much courage as she could assume,

"All the young ladies in our house have their ears pierced."

But, alas! for Susan, Parson Hill did not alter his position, and the silence was still unbroken. This torture was almost too much for her, and in despair she added falteringly,

"And—and—that's all, sir."

"Thank you," said Parson Hill urbanely; and Susan was relieved immediately by hearing the

hum of the school recommence. "Little ones, thank this young lady for telling us in so clear a manner, *why* she had her ears *rung!*"

A loud chorus of thanks followed this, but it by no means added to Susan's equanimity.

"And now," said the parson, looking round the room, "let me inquire if you little ones understand what the young lady said. Charley," continued he, fixing his eye upon a curly-headed boy, "why had this young lady her ears rung?"

"Coz Meely Stump axed her to; and coz the t'othern done theirn—and—and—coz that's all!"

"Very well, Charley," said the vicar, approvingly; "but now we must return lore for lore. Bill Spike, tell this young lady why this pig has his nose rung?"

"Coz all the t'other pigs have theirn."

"And why have the others their noses so ornamented?" said the parson.

A dead silence fell on the school, and the parson —by signs only—repeated this question, pointing alternately to each boy without further result, until at length he came to Tom Brown, who said,

"Coz they grubs up much betterer."

But further information on this entirely new subject was prevented, for the time being, by the entrance of a servant, bringing a message to Parson Hill, and recalling him to his home, to Susan Picard's inexpressible relief.

No sooner was Parson Hill a tolerable distance from the school, and the pig by his orders driven back to the common, than Susan arose.

"You will wait for me, Susy dear?" said Mary.

"Wait here!" said Susan, indignantly, "when I have the power to get away? Not very likely, Mary."

And she moved towards the door.

"But, Susan, dear, I assure you"—and Mary could not control her smiles—"you may chance to meet that huge pig, and if you were alone I cannot imagine what would happen to you!"

"I do not care for any pig in creation," said Susan, angrily, "half so much as I care for being fastened up in this 'orrid school! I cannot wait, Mary."

And with ignoble haste Susan left the room, and ran all the way to Mary's cottage, inwardly resolving that nothing should ever again take her

to that terrible school-room, to be so audaciously catechised by that tiresome and disagreeable Parson Hill!

CHAPTER IV.

WHICH TREATS OF THE HANDSOMEST MAN IN THE VILLAGE AT HOME.

MEANWHILE Isaac, with the child in his arms, and followed by the woman, continued his staggering walk towards the smithy, where he eventually arrived, and where as usual sat the good Widow Simpson, knitting under the shed.

"Morning, widdy, and how be you? Here's Isaac a-carrying the child," said the woman.

"I be's pratty well, Molly, thank you; and how be you?" said the Widow Simpson. "Isaac has got a kind heart, and most times takes to the leetle ones; and oftimes I wonder me he does not wed. Gie I the lad."

Isaac placed the child on his grandmother's lap,

and with a keen consciousness of his small ability to walk upright, steadied himself by leaning for support on all things that were near; and by degrees he reached the door that led into the cottage, and entered it.

"Him be a fine child, Molly," said the widow.

"Yes, he be a fine lad surely; two year old come the eleventh of next month."

"And sturdy limbs," said the widow, stroking the child's legs and arms.

"Ay, widdy, him be a sturdy one for a two-year old!"

"Sit you down, Molly, and rest awhile."

"No, no, I must go, thank you all the same, widdy, but I has got all the washing about, and then I has so many of 'em," pointing to the child, "four bits of things!"

"Blessings on them!" said the widow; "they'll maybe plague thee, Molly, for a two or three year, but come that time over they'll be great helps!"

And she kissed and caressed the boy, and returned him to his mother.

The Widow Simpson remained seated in the shed, watching the woman and her motherly antics with

the child, and also returning the salutations that from time to time Molly made; and even for a few minutes after they were out of sight, the Widow Simpson sat quietly knitting, and apparently watching for incidents of any kind likely to occur, up or down the long village street; but though seemingly so unmoved, her heart was aching at the remembrance of her grandson Isaac, whose pitiable state she knew too well.

After a reasonable time of this decent make-believe, viz., that there was nothing different from the ordinary course of things, she slowly arose, laid her knitting upon her stool, as was her wont on short absences from the shed, and re-entered the cottage.

Isaac was not in the lower room; of that she was glad. She hoped, too, that he had been able to get up stairs, and into bed. She opened the door at the foot of the stairs, and was again consoled by the fact that he was not lying there, his head resting uncomfortably on the topmost stair, as she had before seen him, and his long legs and heavy body distributed as the case might be. Slowly on tiptoe, so as to avoid all noise, the

widow ascended the stairs, and pushed gently the door at the top, but found herself unable to open it. Again and again she tried, each time making some little progress, until at length she could peep into the room; and there she saw Isaac on the floor, his feet touching the door, his head close to a large wooden press that stood at the far end of the room, so near as to give her the idea that he must have had a severe blow when he fell. The poor woman stood a few seconds contemplating this wreck of early manhood, inwardly acknowledging she could do nothing for him.

All her love, and it was great—all her self-denial, and it was constant—all the anxiety she had to aid him, to restore him to his "right mind"—all these desires were of no avail. There he must lie—a log on the great ocean of the world—drifting, powerless, who shall say where? If God saw fit to require his soul on that very day, who could say him nay!

"But, oh!" thought the widow, "if Isaac was only to go to God's blessed home, why, I would bear to live here by myself for the lad's sake, though it would be cruel lonely—cruel lonely

without him!—only I don't know; can the drunkard go to God's heaven? And he is so gude," continued she, as she sat upon the stair. "Oh! that the Almighty would hearken to I; he be not bad, poor lad; he be not bad in nothing but this; he likes cider—I can't say as he does not."

After a little time, she dried up her tears, and, descending the stairs, went again to the shed and resumed her knitting. On this afternoon she was not visited by Susan Picard, whose amazement at the alteration in "the handsomest man in the village," when under the influence of cider, had not yet subsided.

What, then, would have been her dismay had she seen him "at home!" And, besides this, Susan herself had not recovered from the shock of Parson Hill's wondrous catechising. The few neighbours or villagers who passed and repassed the smithy, spoke to the Widow Simpson in their customary tone and manner; none seemed to know that Isaac, the stalwart and strong, lay weaker and less powerful than a child. If any knew of the occurrences of the day, they did not

condole with her, but left her in happy ignorance of their own knowledge.

About four o'clock in the afternoon, as was her wont, the widow once more left her stool in the shed and re-entered the cottage, where she busied herself by placing the kettle in such a manner as to cause the water to boil up quickly; then she ostentatiously placed the tea-things as if for two, as she said to herself,

"As suppose a neighbour was to look in, then they might think as Isaac be all right, poor lad. I wish he was."

She cut slices of thick bread and butter, such as she ordinarily prepared for Isaac; but she herself only sopped a little bread in her tea. Thus prepared, as it seemed, for any emergency, she began to fill up the teapot from the kettle, when a deep shadow came over the room, and she could not see what she was doing. She raised her eyes, and saw that the space left by the wide open casement was filled up by the fine head and shoulders of Parson Hill, who, leaning his arms inside the window, put in his head and said,

"And so, widow, Isaac's not here! I hope you will not wait for him——"

The widow replaced the kettle on the turf-fire before she replied, and then she said cautiously:

"No, yer honour, no—the lad is not here," and, after a little pause, she resumed; "but, maybe, yer honour would like to see him?"

"No, no—I can wait," said the vicar; "but since he is not here, and you have prepared so bountifully for him, what then do you say to giving me a cup of his tea?—eh, widow? Why, I am very thirsty this hot day, talking to the young ones at the school is no joke, I can tell you. Thank you—why, how quick you are! your hospitality has no doubts to deaden it. I have only to say the word, and lo! the smoking tea is in my hand."

"Will yer honour have something to eat?—I'll cut it mighty thin," and she began to cut slices of thin bread and butter.

"No, no—pray don't cut for me—thank you; I am thirsty, and your tea is very refreshing."

"Yer honor's kindly welcome," said the widow, with a curtsy and a very gratified smile.

"But I wish with all my heart I could eat one of those huge slices I see ready prepared for Isaac —that is, widow, if you would promise me not to cut any more for him; and then, you see, he would lose half his tea, and that would be a proper punishment for his negligence in keeping you waiting."

"No, yer honour, no," said she, with a shake of her head; "I don't never wait for the lad. I gets my teas most times to four o'clock, and Isaac knows it."

"Well, I am glad you don't wait; it is unseemly that the aged should wait for the young. And I am very glad I have had Isaac's tea—tell him so, will you? Tell him, if he wishes to have the pleasure of drinking his own tea, he must mind and be in time, or it may happen that somebody will drink it for him. Here is the cup—thank you—thank you—I declare I am 'like a giant;' you know the rest," and Parson Hill walked away, while the widow finished the quotation:

"His honour means 'like a giant refreshed with wine,' I suppose; but it was only tea," continued she, as her face reflected the inward satisfaction

this visit of Parson Hill's had given her. "I be fair thank-hearted," said she, as she sipped her tea; "it be plain and plain as his honour knows nothing."—By knowing nothing she meant that he was ignorant of Isaac's state of inebriety; for though she was herself so clear-sighted as to his state, the moment she saw him, with that delusion that affection creates she hoped that others were blind. Alas! she but deceived herself—Isaac's condition was well known all over the village.—"I be not so badly off as Hannah Barker," soliloquised she, "for Peter Barker is more like to a wild beastes nor to a man. But, poor thing, I be sorry for she—poor Hannah! No, no, Isaac doesn't never do so to I—that is, never hasn't, I should say," said she, correcting herself; for she foresaw, if Isaac persisted in these bad courses, nothing could save him from becoming in the end like Peter Barker.

Hannah Barker was the Widow Simpson's opposite neighbour; her husband was a carter, sometimes employed by the farmers in the neighbourhood. He was a man of bad principle and bad habits—a lazy, cunning, cruel man. His ill-

treatment of his wife was the talk of the village; seldom was Peter Barker sober, often out of work, more frequently maintained in idleness by the industry and management of his wife, than by any exertion of his own—too often wresting from her the moneys she had earned to go and sit for hours, and even days together in the cider shop, wasting his own energies, and a sore example of the consequences of such conduct to all lookers-on. And then, when he had spent his last farthing, and had also had as much upon credit as the landlady of the "Packhorse" would permit, he would manage to stagger home, sometimes stupidly heavy, and overcome by his excesses, when bed would be a refuge to which he would willingly hasten. But alas! not unfrequently he would be in an excitable and quarrelsome mood, and then his conduct would be harsh and cruel. On these occasions his poor wife would become the victim of his brutality from heavy blows, hard kicks, and horrible language. Her screams would alarm the neighbourhood, and here and there a woman, turning pale at the thought of Hannah's sufferings, would say, "Deary me! it be that Peter

Barker a-thrashing poor Hannah," while the men who happened to be near would go to her assistance, rescue her from the clutches of her cruel husband, and sometimes even turn his heavy carter's whip against himself.

No; the good Widow Simpson had not yet endured the indignity of a blow from her son, though even she was conscious that there were times when Isaac's naturally fine temper was soured by the influence of the large quantities of cider he had swallowed; and when these thoughts arose in her mind, she could not but look with a trembling eye into that future which is at all times so mercifully hidden from us, and fear for the consequences of Isaac's present misconduct.

It had happened more than once that Isaac himself had gone to Hannah's assistance when her husband was ill-treating her, and at such times the jeers of Peter, who so often met Isaac at the "Packhorse," were gall and wormwood to the latter.

"Oh-h!—you doon't niver drink naw cider—yu doon't!" would Peter say, in the broadest *patois* of the moor. "Haw, haw, haw!—yu niver smokes naw pipes—yu dusn't; an' you niver hasn't wol-

loped naw 'oomen—coz why?—coz yu ain't got nun for to wollop! Haw, haw, haw!—yu bees a fine un, yu bees, tu set yu sen up thesen ways! Yu 'm a big un, an' I's a leetle un; bu' I'll lick thee—I'll lick thee, tho' thee bees sich a big un!—coom on! coom on!"

And Peter would square his fists and try to provoke Isaac to a fight.

But here Isaac's good qualities came into play; for Peter was a small, thin man of fifty, grey-headed, and rarely in good health; and Isaac, young, tall, and strong, was obliged to swallow these taunts as best he might; conscience whispered he partly deserved them, and he could not lift his hand against a man, his neighbour, and one whose frame and health were so opposite to his own.

But the hardest stroke of all was usually left by Peter for the last; for when Isaac, satisfied with having rescued Hannah, and pertinaciously avoiding all notice of Peter's sneers, turned to re-enter his own home, Peter would call out—

"An' so yu sneaks awee, yu does—liken to a dug, as a-bunt his teale, and feared o' gettin' a gude lickin' from I. Haw, haw, haw!"

CHAPTER V.

OF THE WIDOW SIMPSON AND HER MANY MISTAKES.

"DEARY me! why, theybe nine on 'em a-striking by the church, and it be most dark," said the Widow Simpson, as she went to the window with the intention of closing the casement.

While in the act of doing so, her neighbour, Hannah Barker, walked up to her cottage opposite, with an empty clothes-flasket in her hand, and as she stood unlocking her door, she turned round and nodded.

This caused the widow to linger a little before closing the casement; and as soon as Hannah had relieved herself of the flasket, she came across the road, and said,

"I be hearty glad you be not shut up yet,

widdy. I be late a-getting home from the Vickridge; but Mistress Smith gave I such a lump o' figgy pudden *(plum pudding)*, and I want you to have some—just gie I a knife. Here, widdy, it be cruel nice, and maybe I'll lift up the shutter. Eh, widdy?"

"Ay, lass, thank thee."

"Theere!" said Hannah, as she raised the shutter, "'tisna the first time I have give a helping hand. Gude night."

"And gude night, and thank you, Hannah, and blessings on ye, and many of them for a kind-hearted creature as you be surely," said the widow as she screwed up the window-shutter.

Outside the window of Widow Simpson's cottage—and, indeed, generally at the cottages throughout the village—hung upon hinges a large shutter of wood. There was no mechanical contrivance inside or out to assist in lifting this dead weight. For many years the widow had not attempted to raise it; and if she could have lifted it, she could not jerk it into its position, so as to put through a hole in the shutter, and the frame of the window, a large iron pin, which was prevented

from being taken out on the outside, or from falling back, by a bolt inside.

"Why, theere now! Him be a-coming, I do think," said the widow, startled by some noise, and standing in the act of listening for the sound of Isaac's feet descending the stairs. "The lad will want food—it will do him good to eat!"

All was still, however, and the widow resumed her soliloquy.

"It be a mistake—I havna heerd him."

Then to ascertain if she had or had not heard Isaac moving in his room, she crept softly upstairs, and, pushing the door, which now swung easily open, she saw that Isaac had changed his position, though he still lay all his length on the floor.

"Ay, ay, better to let him have it out," said she as she turned away and entered another room. But the poor widow did not immediately prepare for rest. She seated herself on the edge of her bed, and, crossing her arms one over the other, appeared to be waiting for some event that might happen at any moment; and while thus waiting so lonely and patient, her thoughts reverted to her own early life.

"It's a mistake," said she; "ay, ay, many is the mistake as comes after the first, and the mistakes of these days is only the children of that as come first! I didna think it was a mistake to choose to be wed to he!"—the pronoun standing in the widow's mind for the man of her early attachment. "If I had but a-liked Jeffry Badge; but I didna—he'd a-got ways as I'd no mind to, and he was no betterer off nor him! But the neighbours did say—they *did*—'Mind thee, Betty, Isaac Simpson's a bad un, he likes cider.' I thought it was a mistake, cos I never seed him drink no cider; but it was not. And then they said to I, 'Jeffry's a man well-to-do, a-baking his own bread, and a-having folkses corn to grind;' and that was true, but I thought to myself, 'Ay, but he isna Isaac! He cannot ring the bells—the 'bob-major' and the 'grandad,' and he cannot sing with a cheery tone as Isaac does!' And then again Jeffry was a man with a white face, and a leetle bit sort of a man, so I didna take to Jeffry, and I did take to Isaac! It was a mistake—mistake the first, the father and mother of all them as is now; for Isaac—rest his saule!—*was* fond

of cider, and big man as he was, and red rosy cheeks, and thumping limbs, it was all no use. Only that the Almighty God in heaven knows for the bestes; else would I think as Isaac's limbs was a mistake, for why should he have such limbs, and then rollick in the cider shop, 'stead of using of 'em? Ay, ay, it be o'er now—nay, but it isna —forbye the lad is there a-doing like his grandad!" And then there was "she"—the pronoun again standing in the widow's mind for her only child. "And when the Lord Almighty gived I she and no more, and I had only got she to bring up, and no lad to be tooked off to the cider shop, and I sits a-thinking as everything is all right—why, it isna—it be a mistake, for it all goed over again. There was two of them again as comed after my pratty meeden, just the very same as they had comed after I. And one of these was uncommon fond o' cider surely; and the leetle meed wouldna have him; and I thought her was so wise, so wiser than she's mother! And so her tooked Roger Watson, and that wasna right, though it sim so; but it was a mistake; forbye Roger only lived a year, and then he leaved her with that young

babby in she's arms, poor thing! and she greet and greet, and then fair died outright. And so her leaved the child to I—and to Isaac. And that was another mistake; cos why, should ever the poor lad keep off from the cider shop when his grandad tooked him there! It was the grandam as gave he such a grandad as was the reason as the poor lad got into such troubles. Oh-h!—I wish as I didna make so many mistakes!" and as the tears rolled down her aged cheeks, she began to undress, and finally got into bed.

But the Widow Simpson did not attempt to sleep; she lay in bed still, in the act of listening, her countenance, if it could have been seen, expressing anxiety and eagerness. Her watch was unrewarded. Isaac slept on.

"Four of 'em," said she, as the church clock struck the hour; "and if he cannot ring they bells, mercy on us! but I am afeared as this time the passen'll turn he adrift—adrift—ay, drift—drifting on—down—down—"

But by this time the poor woman, overcome by drowsiness, lost the thread of her thoughts, and

fell into an uneasy slumber. When she awoke, the sun was shining full upon her as she lay, and though on first awaking she had only a sensation as of some heavy care on her mind, in a few seconds full consciousness returned, and she remembered the events of the preceding day.

"Six of 'em," said she, as she started up in bed when the clock struck the hour, "and this a *Saintses morn!** Oh! my lad, my lad, and art thee not awaked up?"

She partially clothed herself, and went to Isaac's room. To her astonishment he was not there. The bed had not been slept in; the window was wide open. Isaac's cap lay just where it had fallen the night before, and there were drops of blood on the floor, close by the press where his head had lain in heavy sleep when the poor woman saw him last. Overcome by her night of anxiety and watching, her nerves gave way; she sat down and made no effort to restrain the tears that now flowed freely.

"Oh—h! him be gone again," said she; "him be off again to that 'Old Packhorse!'—what shall

* See Note G.

I do? It be a saintses morn, and him such a good un to they bells."

Some slight unusual sound arrested her attention, and she sat straining her ears to understand the noise. She heard a step, combined with the removal of some piece of furniture in the lower room.

"I have made another mistake," said she almost joyfully; "I do think as that the lad be a-settling the chairs a bit."

She returned to her own room, and while she continued to dress herself she listened occasionally to the sounds from below.

"Ay, ay, it be the lad," said she, peering through the scanty window curtain, which had not yet been undrawn, "and it will do him gude," continued she, as she saw Isaac with his head under the natural spring of water that flowed from a rock at the back of the cottage.

Cheerily now the widow attended to her personal appearance, though she did not venture to draw aside the curtain or open the window while Isaac was so near; for few things in this good woman's conduct were more to be valued than the absence of reproaches to him for his misdeeds.

It was well-known in the village that Hannah Barker, when her husband was sober, taunted him with his mal-practices, and, to use the phrase often applied to her, "Hannah Barker couldna keep a ceevil tongue in she's head."

While the contrary was the case with the Widow Simpson, we must do Isaac the justice to say that this forbearance on the part of his kind old relative made him often determine to be steady, to leave off drinking cider, and not pain her by his misdoings. But Isaac's resolution was not equal to the temptation, and the widow had still to mourn over his folly.

Only, therefore, when Isaac left the spring, did she venture to undraw the curtains and open the window. Always an early riser, there was nothing unusual in her being up soon after six on a summer's morn. But on this especial morn, the kind old soul tarried about her room longer than usual, and busied herself with little nothings to give Isaac time to put away from his clothes or his own appearance any remains of the previous night's debauch.

When she at length ventured down, Isaac was

not there, but the heavy window-shutter had been put back, and again the casement stood wide open. The room had evidently been "tidied" by hands accustomed to it. The turf fire blazed brightly, the kettle was singing loudly, the breakfast-things were on the small three-legged table, the loaf and a jar of butter.

"Ay, ay, and I be thankful—I do say as I be thankful; and I do thank the great God in heaven as a-hearkened to my prayers. And the lad's better the morn—and I *do* think as they Saintses will have they bells—*I do!*"

Her reverie was interrupted by the entrance of Isaac, tall, upright, and manly-looking. On the previous day Susan Picard had seen him "all angles in his arms and legs," but this appearance had vanished, and Isaac was himself again.

On this occasion there was rather more shyness in his manner than usual, consequent on his self-conviction of his culpability; and perhaps there was also a little more haste and eagerness in his attentions to the widow, as if by this he could atone for his misdeeds. He kissed her, as was his custom morning and evening, and they began breakfast.

Conversation was now a difficult matter, for none of the incidents of the previous afternoon could have been ventured upon by the widow without fear of reminding Isaac of, and thus covertly reproaching him for, his sin; and as Isaac himself had no ideas at all on that same afternoon, there was little to marvel at in the present dearth of a subject. The widow, however, as is too often said of the female sex, "found her tongue first."

"I feared I was just a bit late the morn, Isaac."

"Oh! no matter, mother, I shall be in time."

"Ay, lad, so as you have got time to get up into the belfry, it be all right, eh? And how be the new one getting on?"

"Very well," said Isaac; "they are trying to raise a full set of men, who shall practise twice a week, and so get their hands in."

"Ay, but they will be many a year afore they'll ring as you do, Isaac!"

"They do very well now," said Isaac; "two or three tried their hands a month ago, and made a very good beginning."

"When they does the 'bob-major' and the 'gran——"

"There's the quarter," said Isaac, interrupting; "I must go."

And away he went, his head unconsciously held up, for he was proud of his position as head of the belfry, and glad that the previous day's debauch had not entirely unfitted him for this day's duties; he was thankful in his own way that he had escaped a great mortification, but not so humbled in heart as he ought to have been, after such misconduct. For on one occasion Parson Hill had told him, if he ever again entered the belfry in a state of intoxication, it should be the last time he would permit him to ring. Parson Hill was well known to keep his word; but Isaac, instead of feeling humiliated at the recollection of his intemperance, rather rejoiced that his sin would be unknown to Parson Hill, and that he himself was still head of the belfry.

CHAPTER VI.

OF PARSON HILL'S METHOD OF GROWING TURNIPS.

"WHY, the bells are ringing!—somebody is married this morning, eh, Mary?" said Susan Picard to Mary Cope.

"No, Susy; it is a saint's day."

"A what, Mary?" said Susan in surprise.

"A saint's day. Did you never hear of a saint, Susy?—St. Matthew, St. Mark, and many more?"

"Yes, to be sure I have," said Susan. "I know all about the saints and the apostles too, but I never heard the bells rung for a saint's day."

"That is because you live in London, where, if I may judge from what you say, they do nothing as they ought to do."

"Bless me, Mary! why, then do you think we have time enough on our hands to remember such things as saints' days? Birthdays, I suppose you mean—a saint's birthday. What should we in London care for St. Matthew's birthday?—why, sometimes we even forget our own!"

"But here, Susy, we do all things just as they have always been done," said Mary, "from the time——"

"From the time when Adam and Eve and all the saints and the apostles lived together in Paradise, I suppose," said Susan, interrupting.

"How can you talk such nonsense?" said Mary.

"Nonsense!—I don't call it nonsense to know one's bible; but you always did think you knew better than other people, and you think so still," said Susan, with a little sneer.

"When you talk of the saints and the apostles living with Adam and Eve in Paradise, I cannot think you better informed than myself on such subjects."

"And pray why not? You are so conceited, Mary. I have read all about Adam and Eve

living in Paradise; and if the saints and the apostles did not live there with them, can you tell me where they did live? Why, there was no other place on the earth then," said Susan, triumphantly.

"Hush! Susan," said Mary, putting her hands to her ears, as if to shut out further argument, and going to the open door. She stood for a few seconds in the act of listening, and the sound of the bells came merrily on the wind. She heard enough to satisfy herself that Isaac was in the belfry, and then returned to her breakfast.

"Well, you have a colour, Mary!" said Susan in amazement; for the fact that Isaac was once more saved from the disgrace of being expelled from the ringing had sent the hot blood thankfully and hopefully into Mary's cheeks.

Mary, up to the time of Susan's arrival in Lawsleigh, had affected not to care for Isaac's attentions; but the daily flirtations at the smithy had awakened in her a better knowledge of her own heart. She had discovered her jealousy of Susan, and she now felt that humiliation to Isaac

would be sorrow to herself; and yet poor Mary remembered, with a shudder of disgust, Isaac's inebriety of the preceding day.

"Yes; I generally have rosy cheeks," said Mary quietly.

"But not so red as now. I am sure you are thinking about something, with your eyes so sparkling and your mouth so trying not to laugh, and something pleasant too!"

Mary no longer tried to conceal her laughter, as she said,

"I am sure, Susy, you would make any one laugh with your queer remarks; but come, let us have some breakfast."

"Breakfast indeed!—so you gobble up your food as fast as you can that you may rush off to that 'orrid school," said Susan. "I am glad I have nothing to do with such a place."

"I am not going to the school to-day; I don't go on a Saturday; and it is not a horrid school."

"And you are not going? My! what good news!"

"I wish you would remember the school is bread to me, and a very decent and very respectable way

of getting one's bread," said Mary, rather grandly.

"It's him as makes the place so 'orrid," said Susan, "that Parson Hill! I am sure if he looks like a gentleman, he does not behave like one. He's so very tormenting."

"You should not tell falsehoods," said Mary, laughing, "or affect ignorance of well-known things. If you had not been affected, Parson Hill would have been very kind to you."

"Goodness gracious, Mary! Me affected! do you call me affected! Why, what will you say next? And as for telling a falsehood, you know very well, Mary, I never had been in this empty, slow, and 'illy place in all my life before; and I am very sure I never did see a live pig in London, so it was no falsehood after all."

"You have not lived in London all your life. But, Susy, pray don't be cross, for I can assure you the parson is very kind. Oh! Mr. Marvel, you are just come right; now do tell Susan, is not Parson Hill very kind?"

"Vary, vary indeed, Mistress Cope," replied a tall thin man, who stood looking in at the open window.

Susan thought she never had seen so ugly a man; the thick, curly, sandy hair, light blue eyes, and gaunt-looking features of the sturdy James Marvel did not suit the taste of the fastidious Susan.

"He's very queer in his school, I can tell you," said Susan.

"Is he?" said the cautious Scotchman.

"No, he is not," said Mary, in a decided tone; "and, Susan, it is better not to speak at all than to say evil of the absent."

"Gude advice, miss," said James to Susan; "I am a-thinking as 'tis very gude advice. Mistress Cope's a sensible little body, as weel as a learned."

"Do you know Parson Hill?" said Susan, pettishly.

"Know him! If twenty years' time enough to know a body, perhaps I do know him, miss."

"Twenty years! dear me, have you lived in this queer, odd, silent place for so long a time? Why, a month of it would kill me," said Susan.

"You are very soon killed, then, it's my belief. But why shouldna I live here these twenty years?

I was a lad rising close upon twenty when I come first, and I may say I certainly do know something about the minister; and there's one thing I know, he's made a mon o' me!"

And James brought his fist so heavily on the window-sill as to make Susan start.

"Perhaps he sometimes takes extraordinary means to convey information," said Mary, rather grandly, and in a decided tone; for James Marvel was much looked up to in the village, and Mary was a great favourite with him. His occasional bits of flattery to her intellect and personal appearance were gratifying to her, and at this moment, and in Susan's presence, she tried to keep up her character for wisdom.

"He takes queer ways," said Susan, scornfully.

"People has difference in opinions, miss," said James. "Maybe, now, if you knowed how the minister made a mon o' me you'd say 'tis vary queer—but I be no to that mind."

"Come in and have a cup of tea," said Mary.

"Na, na, thank ye kindly," said James; "I's a-watching for auld Jacob as is gone to the ringing, so I'll just stand here till th' peal's out."

"Then, James, do tell Susan about the turnips and the strawberries when you came here first."

"Maybe, miss, ye wouldna like a lang story?" said James, as he lifted his cap from his head, and pushed his fingers through his hair.

"Indeed there's nothing I like better," said Susan, joyfully, her mind reverting to the cheap literature, in a serial form, with which not only London, but all England, is inundated, excepting only places so difficult of access as Dartmoor, and little imagining it was the history of some part of his own life that he would relate.

"Vary weel. Then I must tell you I wasna twenty years auld, and I come here to the minister, and grandfather's his head mon then, and got me in. And so I was a-standing to the back of the master's chair, while he was a-eating of his dinner, and he said, 'Some turnips,' said he. That means, miss," said James, explaining to Susan, "as I was to hand they turnips, and as he would help hisself. But there was none; so I goes up to him, and says I, 'There's no turnips.'

"'And why not?' said he.

"'Coz they has not growed yet,' says I; for I

was a-gardening then, miss, though I was a-doing hosses, and a-driving, and a-cleaning the carriage, and everything else to that time o' day!"

"Goodness gracious me! how dreadfully tired you must have been!" said Susan.

"And when, pray, would you have a mon tire hisself," said James, staring at Susan, "if not at twenty years auld?"

Susan did not reply, and James continued:

"Weel, miss, in a few minutes more, 'Some turnips,' said the master. So I thought he'd maybe forgotten, and I goes up to him as bould as bould could be, and says I, 'There's no turnips!'

"'And for why is there no turnips?' says he.

"'I have a-telled yer honour why,' says I.

"'You have told me, sir,' says he, mighty angry; 'then, sir, tell me again.'

"'Coz they has not growed yet,' says I, most mazed.

"'And why have they not growed yet?' says he.

"'Coz it's mighty early yet, and coz there's no rain,' says I.

"'Rain or no rain,' says he, 'I mean to have turnips. Turnips grows by nights as well as by

days; there's plenty time to grow turnips; now you know my mind!'

"And, miss, I can tell you," said James, as he pushed his cap back from his forehead, "I was uncommon glad when the dinner was over; I was fair flabbergasted out o' my very wits!"

"What a 'orrid man, Mary! He really is, whatever you may say," said Susan.

"I take leave to differ with you, miss," said James, in a serious tone. "The minister's a very gude mon; and if I didna take care to grow turnips enough, I was a big fule for my pains!"

"I can't see the good of going on at you in that way," said Susan.

"Maybe you can't, miss, but I could, and most 'specially with grandfather's help. And it was not only turnips, but peas, and beans, and carrots, and parsnips, and sparrowgrass—everything to its turn; and he was always a-worriting me to give him something as I hadna got."

"That's just what I say," said Susan; "he is such a worry—in such a cool and contented sort of a way—and all about nothing!"

"Begging your pardon, miss, but I thought it

was all about something! Howsomdiver, there comed a time when the master began a-axing for strawberries; so I up and told him there was none, and wasn't going to be none for a long whiles; and I thought then I had fairly stopped his speechifying. But no such thing, for just after I had leaved the dining-room, I hears the bell ring, so when I goes in, says he:

"'Some strawberries, James.'

"I stood stock-still and stared at him.

"'Some strawberries, James,' says he again.

"But I was that feared I could not speak, and I stood stock-still a-staring my eyes out; and he leaved me standing there a-staring at he for most ten minutes, as it seemed to me; and I got so much worse feared, I was fain to take hold of the table, coz I trembled that much."

"And that is just as he does," said Susan, "puts every body in a tremble, and I am sure he made me quite ill. How I do pity you, poor man; but do go on."

"Peety! oh! I don't desarve no peety. But when he had let me stand long enough in that there ague-fit, says he:

"'If I said to you a glass of water, James, would you stand staring in that way?'

"'But there isn't none,' says I, a-thinking of the strawberries.

"'Do you mean to tell me there's no water?' says he.

"'Oh! yes—yes, there's plenty water,' says I.

"'Then,' says he again quite slow-like, 'how durst you to say there's no water.'

"And he bringed his fist slap down on to the table with such a noise, I fair roared out; for I thought my head was gone clean aff my shoulders."

"Oh! gracious me! I knew I was right, Mary. It is the most miserable way of treating a fellow-creature."

"Oh!" said James, laughing, "it was all moonshine. And presently after says he, that was when I had comed a bit to my senses, miss, says he,

"'Do you happen to know my riding-whip?'

"'Yes, sir,' says I.

"'Then fetch it,' says he."

"Abominable, quite abominable, Mary! I can't bear to hear of such cruelty to a fellow-creature."

"But the bells is down, miss, and auld Jacob's a-coming. Morning, miss; morning, Mistress Cope!" and, with a nod of his head, James Marvel walked away, leaving Susan in a state of excitement as to the probable termination of the scene between him and his master.

"Gracious goodness!—what a pity he can't stop and finish his story! I suppose he was very much hurt—very cruelly used," said Susan. "I can quite credit it from my own knowledge of the man. So hard-hearted, Mary, and especially to a lady!"

For Susan was thinking more of herself than of James Marvel.

"Why, Mr. Marvel is not a lady," said Mary.

"Never mind that," said Susan; "the ill-treatment can be proved."

CHAPTER VII.

OF ISAAC WATSON'S HAMMER, AND MARY COPE'S FOREHEAD.

"AND, Mary," continued Susan, "this cruel treatment is just the same sort of thing as we read of in 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' The wicked master taking advantage of his position to use his poor servant ill."

"What nonsense you do talk, Susan; you seem to have read very queer books, and gained very foolish ideas."

"And you seem to live in a queer place, and get foolish ideas in that fashion. Anyhow, my ideas are as good as yours, inasmuch as they come from something real; for let me tell you, Mary, I *have* read 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' You, I daresay,

have never heard of the book; as, indeed, how should you, living in such a 'orrid place as this, and with such queer people about you."

Mary did not reply, and, after a little pause, Susan resumed.

"But since you have no school to-day, what then shall we do? Where shall we go?"

"I mostly do up my sewing Saturdays," said Mary; "and after that we can walk where you like."

"Then we'll go to the smithy—shall we?" said Susan, eagerly, "and see how the old lady is getting on."

Susan stopped in the middle of her speech, for she saw Mary's countenance change, and altered her words. It was on the tip of her tongue to say "And have a talk with Isaac;" but instead of this she made the Widow Simpson the cause of her wish to go there.

Mary—though she was vexed at Susan's eagerness to see Isaac, for she was not deceived by the fashion of her speech—inwardly acknowledged she herself was nothing loth. Quietly, therefore, she acquiesced in Susan's proposal, and after their early

dinner, the two young women set off for the smithy.

When within a short distance of Widow Simpson's cottage, they were alarmed by loud and piercing shrieks from a woman, accompanied by horrible oaths in a man's voice, and the sound of heavy blows. While for the moment arrested in their walk by these unusual sounds, to their astonishment they saw Isaac Watson, with his great hammer in his hand, rush excitedly from the smithy to the opposite cottage. He tried to enter, calling out as he did so—

"Peter!—Peter!—I'll break the door down if you don't either open it or stop your blows!"

The sound of the blows ceased, but the woman's wailing voice continued, and a man's rough head appeared at the open window. It was Peter Barker, who, after prefacing his speech with curses and foul oaths, said—

"Isaac, haw!—haw! I dun thee this time. The doore's fast. Comin' an' a-separatin' man an' wife won't du by no manner o' means! Them as God's a-jinded——"

"Hold your tongue!" roared Isaac; "how dare you use such words? Open the door, or I tell you

I'll break it open," and he uplifted his huge hammer as in the act of striking.

"Goo on—goo on; brak en oppen, an' I'll hae yer afore t' justices for knocken a man's door down —haw!—haw!—haw!—goo on!"

All this time the two young women distinctly heard Hannah's moans, but, to their surprise, in a few seconds the door of Peter's cottage was opened, and she, with her hair in a tangled mass, no cap on, her gown sleeves nearly off, her arms bleeding, and faint and terrified, rushed out.

"Thou p'isonous ferret, where 't going'?—cum back!" said Peter, and he turned from the window and came forth, cracking his whip as he said, and seemingly with much enjoyment, "I'll wollop yer hide!"

"Stand back!" said Isaac, trying to prevent Peter from putting his threat into execution; and Hannah crossed the road safely, and took refuge in the smithy.

"I dar' yer to tich my wife," said Peter, cracking his whip.

"I'll touch you, you coward!" said Isaac, "if you don't let the poor thing alone!"

"Oh! you'll tich I, wull yer; an' I'll tich ye," and Peter again cracked his whip and made a feint at Isaac's legs.

"Keep off!" said Isaac, uplifting his hammer; "I shan't stand any nonsense."

"You been't a-gooin' to stan' noo nonsense; then here's some sense," and Peter now used his whip smartly about Isaac's legs.

Peter had had just enough cider to make him what he called merry—in other words, he was not so completely under its power as that his bodily strength succumbed to its influence; and, moreover, it had had the effect of making him enjoy his own agility, and the horror that his uplifted hand inspired. He was, as we have said before, a small, wiry man; when sober, capable of great activity. In this instance the pleasure of lashing Isaac seemed so great, that though the latter made repeated attempts to strike with his hammer, Peter, with delighted nimbleness, always evaded the blows of the tall strong man. Isaac grew eager and angry, but Peter laughed.

"Oh, heavens!—mercy me! how frightful!" said Susan; "why, they'll kill each other!"

"Hush, Susan, hush! Let us try to get into the smithy cottage," said Mary.

They kept close to the wall, creeping by its side as well as they could, but a heap of stones, accidentally placed by Isaac's shed, stopped their further progress, and they were obliged to wait a better opportunity to enable them to pass the two men without harm. It so happened while Peter was flourishing his whip in the air, and making occasional feints at Isaac, and the latter repeatedly uplifting his hammer in the act of attempting to strike, that the lash of the whip accidentally curled round the head of the hammer and knotted itself. Isaac took immediate advantage of this by seizing hold of the lash, and Peter, tugging at the handle of the whip, was dragged here and there at the mercy of Isaac, until the latter suddenly let go the lash, and the jerk brought Peter to the ground.

During the early part of this extraordinary fight Isaac stood with his back to the young women, and Peter had taken no notice of them; but this last turn of events had caused the men to change places, and as Isaac, in passionate fury, sprang upon the prostrate man, uplifting his hammer, Mary and

Susan rushed simultaneously forward to try and gain the shelter of the cottage.

Isaac's extended arm fell powerless and unnerved at the unexpected sight of the two young women; while Mary Cope, in her haste to escape from her uncomfortable position, set her foot on a rolling stone and fell on her face, her head coming in contact with Isaac's lowered hammer. The Widow Simpson and Hannah Barker, at sight of this catastrophe, came from the smithy to Mary's assistance, and, with Isaac's help, lifted her senseless into the cottage.

Thus Peter escaped from Isaac's vengeance, and went grumbling away; while Isaac, dismayed at the sight of Mary Cope with a deep gash in her forehead, bleeding profusely and insensible, could only lament over the evil, blame himself, and ask his mother what was to be done.

"Run and fetch the doctor, Isaac, lad," said she; and without another word, Isaac set off to find the nearest medical man.

Three miles Isaac walked, or rather ran, on that hot summer's day, and on reaching Mr. Smith's house, was told "he was out on his rounds, but if

he returned in any reasonable time, he would certainly ride over to Lawsleigh." This was not satisfactory, and Isaac trudged on two miles more to the next nearest professional man; and there met with the same reply. He now turned to retrace his steps, and felt that he must trust to Mr. Smith being able to reach the moor at some period of the day; and up to this time he had allowed his thoughts to dwell more upon the hurt Mary Cope had received, than of his own ill-treatment by Peter.

Isaac was not an ill-tempered or a revengeful man. Having succeeded in rescuing Hannah, he would have returned to his shed in spite of Peter's taunts, had not the little man attempted to strike him; and then when he actually made good his intention, and lashed Isaac most painfully, independent of his suffering, the indignity was enough to make him wish to revenge himself when the opportunity offered. It might have fared ill with Peter if the two young women had not arrested Isaac's attention, but this fact was not uppermost in his mind as he journeyed to fetch assistance; indeed, he was unconscious of the great escape he had had from the sin of taking the life of a fellow-

creature. All that haunted him, besides the fact of Mary Cope's illness, was the humiliating position in which he had been seen by the two belles of the village. They had looked on while he was ignominiously lashed with the carter's whip! And so Isaac's heart was embittered, for the time being, against Peter—against Hannah, whom he had so willingly rescued—and even against himself, for, as he said,

"Being such a fool as to help another man's wife. It's clear to me that pretty Miss Susan will never come near the smithy again after this; and as for Mistress Cope, why, it is quite true that, until I saw her lying so white and still and quiet, I did not know that I *do* like her—like her very much; and for them two to be looking on."

But we must leave Isaac to his weary walk and sad reflections, while we return to Mary Cope.

The Widow Simpson and Hannah quickly applied the necessary means to restore Mary to consciousness, and then they bathed and dressed the wound, while Susan stood helplessly wringing her hands and bemoaning her cousin's fate.

"Goodness gracious! what a face she has got,

poor thing!" said Susan. "Why, she was so nice-looking, and now she is all swelled up and half blind, and—and——"

"Prythee don't fash about good looks," said the widow; "think how great the mercy that the poor saule is alive."

"Alive, why, goodness me!" said Susan; "how could just a little tumble like that kill a body?"

"Knocking yer head on a hammer's like enough to kill a bigger and a thicker head than that," said Hannah, as she stood by Mary's side.

When Mary had sufficiently recovered to understand the nature of the accident, and to know that, though she felt ill from the loss of blood, and shaken by the heavy fall, the result would probably be only a temporary inconvenience to herself, she, like the Widow Simpson, felt deeply grateful that the Almighty had mercifully prevented any more terrible mischance. And, in the course of an hour from the time of Isaac's departure, Susan and she left the smithy for their own home; the widow promising, if medical assistance should arrive, to direct the gentleman to Mary's cottage.

"And so all our pleasure is destroyed by that tiresome Peter Barker—to think that there should be such heaps of tipsy men in this place!" said Susan; "and they always stopping other people's comfort."

"I am sure, Susy, I am very sorry," said Mary; "but you can have a nice walk without me; we are just at home, and I shall not wish to deprive you of——".

"Oh! nonsense, Mary! I shall stay with you. Indeed, I am not quite sure that you are in a fit state to be left alone," said Susan, with great magnanimity as she entered the cottage with Mary.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHICH CONVICTS PARSON HILL OF FAVOURITISM.

"NOW, Mary, dear, put up your feet," said Susan, "and lay your head back on this nice soft pillow I have fetched downstairs for you; you must not work or read—you must be content to be idle."

"It's all very well to say such things, Susy, but what am I to do for to-morrow if I am not better?"

"Why, what is to-morrow so particular?" said Susan.

"It's nothing particular, only it is Sunday," said Mary.

"Oh! yes; but then let us hope you will be well enough to have a nice walk; and you must keep

your veil down, and hide that horrid patch," said Susan.

"I don't wear veils, Susan; and it is not about missing the nice walk that I mind—it's the singing, for I lead the choir."

"You'll be better, Mary, dear."

"But if I am not better?—if I should feel as I do now?—that is what I'm thinking, and that is what troubles me."

"Why, somebody must lead for you, that is all; I can sing beautifully—suppose I try?"

"Yes; but you don't sing Gregorians," said Mary.

"Glorians!" said Susan, staring and opening her mouth wide—"what do you mean?"

"Why, chants called Gregorians. I have got all the volumes of the 'Parish Choir'—Parson Hill gave them to me—and there is a great deal about chants, and many good psalm tunes that we sing in church; and, indeed, Susan, there is much in them that is amusing as well as instructive."

"Yes; but what do you call them?—Uproarians? Why, Mary, I never heard the name."

"Perhaps not; but, fortunately for me, I have been well taught, and Parson Hill has always been so kind to me; so I know all the Gregorians, Susy, not uproars, as you miscall them, and we sing the fourth to-morrow."

"I have such an ear, Mary, and learn everything in such a little minute, that if you will just tune one, you will see how soon I catch it up."

"My head is like a lump of lead, Susy; I can hardly lift it from the pillow, and I do feel so faint and tired, I could not sing a note; but then, if you will get me the book, I will find you the right chant, and you can learn it from the notes."

"Thank you, dear Mary, but I shall not trouble about it now. I know I can sing anything I please in a minute, so why should I hurry?"

Mary wearily closed her eyes, and gave up the point.

Isaac Watson had many enemies even in the small village of Lawsleigh, though he was himself so little quarrelsome, censorious, and ill-natured. But great talents too often excite the envy of those less brilliantly gifted; and these, coupled with his well-known failing, conjured up bitter thoughts in

the minds of more steady-going men. Then, again, Parson Hill's evident liking both for Isaac and the aged widow excited jealousy in many.

"The Passon's very keen after poor Peter Barker. Why cannot he look after Isaac a leetle more?" said they.

But this was a wrong reading of Parson Hill's actions. Isaac's more gifted, as well as more educated mind, combined with his kind heart and general good temper, rendered him less disagreeable when in a state of intoxication than Peter, and, therefore, less prominently offensive. The women were apt to say of him, "Poor Isaac! he's the worst to hisself!" For even when overpowered by his excesses, he was still good-humoured, and rarely irascible and quarrelsome like Peter.

It may be said of Parson Hill that he was a man of few words. If there was absolute necessity to speak, he did not flinch; but if there was little or no good to be gained, he waited a better opportunity.

Peter was caught in his sin almost daily—this could not be overlooked. Isaac's transgressions were much less frequent, and he was always

ashamed of his folly, which was not the case with Peter; indeed, the latter rather gloried in his misdeeds. It is true, Isaac did not on all occasions manfully resist the temptation to inebriety; and the women said, "Poor Isaac, &c.," but the men said, "And why can't the Passon see Isaac?—'tis the Passon's own fault as Isaac's such a drunkard!"—whereas the only instance of favouritism towards Isaac that weighed upon the parson's conscience was that, on hearing of his being in a state of inebriety on one occasion when ringing, he had said, "Only men who are sober should be allowed for the future to enter the belfry." It had been his intention to say, "Only men of strictly sober habits should be permitted to ring."

But the too evident gratification expressed on the countenances of the listeners, on the anticipation of Isaac's expulsion from the belfry, caused him to make a less absolute law, and thus give the sinner not only a chance to escape, but also an opportunity to reform. Nevertheless, he was not the man to punish one and let another escape; although he took into consideration that the misconduct of each man was different in degree, the

consequences different, the men themselves different in their example to the village, men of different mind, different manner, and even of different behaviour under the influence of cider—the balance largely in Isaac's favour.

The sins of Peter always brought evil upon others, and his language and conduct were low and brutalized. But the women were right in their remarks about Isaac; his vice, sad and demoralizing as it was, did not render him a terror to women, and a hard and cruel master to his nearest relative; and thus Parson Hill said to himself, "Give him time—spare him yet awhile—if not for his own sake, at least for the sake of his aged relative, the good Widow Simpson. Who shall say but that he may yet amend?—He, possessed of so many gifts—so good of heart—so cultivated in mind?"

But let not anyone suppose Isaac was not an object to be pitied the more, the more his great talents, handsome person, and good temper were rendered useless by his infirmity. It was because the loss was so great to Isaac personally, and to the world at large generally, that the vicar pitied

so compassionately, and so mercifully gave him yet time to repent and amend. He was not blind to the envy of this man or the hatred of that to Isaac; but until some more serious case than had hitherto happened should occur, it did not seem to him wise to interfere more publicly than he had already done.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW PARSON HILL'S STEADY LITTLE SCHOOL-MISTRESS, MARY COPE, WAS CONVICTED OF RECEIVING VISITS FROM A TOPER.

IT was on Friday afternoon that Parson Hill had called on the Widow Simpson, and cheered her by affecting ignorance of Isaac's unseemly state, and by asking her for a cup of tea; and on Saturday, as he was returning home to dinner, he was overtaken by Mr. Smith, the medical man who had been sent for to Mary Cope.

"Good morning. Why, what brings you this way?—no sickness near us, I hope?" said the parson.

"Rather nearer than you will guess; for by your question you are still in ignorance of what has happened."

"And pray, then, what has happened?" said Parson Hill, as he let the entrance-gate fall to, and walked quickly up to Mr. Smith.

"I am told that Mary Cope and her young friend have been sadly hurt," said Mr. Smith.

"Mary Cope!—pray speak out!" said the parson, sharply. "What can have happened to Mary?"

"It appears," said Mr. Smith, "that Isaac and Peter were fighting—both of course the worse for the cider they had consumed—and Mary and her young friend, in attempting to separate the two men, were knocked down."

"Good heavens! this cannot be true!" said the parson impetuously.

"I can only say I met two men from Lawsleigh, going to spend Sunday on the other side of the moor; they told me exactly what I have repeated to you, adding that Hannah, Peter's wife, had her clothes torn off her back; that Mary Cope had a great gash on her head and face, and her friend was hurt and bruised in no slight degree. I have been sent for—this proves there is something serious in the case."

Parson Hill remained silent for a second or two —the communication seemed beyond credibility.

"Can I see you again after your visit to the school cottage?" said the vicar.

"Certainly—I will call," said Mr. Smith, as he went away.

The parson re-entered his grounds, and crossing the lawn to his house, he came upon James Marvel at his work there.

"Have you heard that Mary Cope has met with an accident?" said Parson Hill, hoping by this means to prove that Mr. Smith's statement was exaggerated.

"No, yer honour," said James.

"Do you know what took place at the smithy this afternoon?"

"Du yer honour call that a accident?" said James, resting on his spade. "I *did* hear tell as Mistress Cope bringed they blows down on herself, and as Isaac wasna to blame. My boy Alic has ha telled me, yer honour, as 'tis said in the village as Peter Barker was a-horse-whipping Isaac with his big carter's whip, and as Isaac was a-hammering Peter wi' his big hammer. And as

Mistress Cope and the young leddy was a-going to the smithy cottage to see the widdy, and as they just comed up in time, and so runned up to part Isaac and Peter, and thereby Isaac hammered Mistress Cope 'stead o' Peter, an' hurted her amazing! But then, yer honour, the most peoples says as he didna mean to hurt her, and as he's vary sorry."

Parson Hill did not venture to make a remark on the strange account given him by James Marvel. He walked quietly on, wondering in his own mind what could have so upset the mind of his hitherto steady little Mistress Mary Cope, as to cause her to try to separate two drunken men.

On Mr. Smith's return, his report was not so satisfactory as Parson Hill had hoped. It is true he gave an account of Mary's present state, and added that fortunately her friend had escaped without injury. And further, his opinion was that if Mary would keep herself quiet until Monday morning, she would then be equal to her duties at the school. She had a wound on her forehead, which luckily might not prove of more harm than the disfigurement of a large scar

for some weeks. She was a good deal shaken by her fall, but he thought there was not any serious damage to fear.

Mr. Smith offered no further information as to the original cause of Mary's fall, and Parson Hill was left in a state of great vexation and annoyance, inasmuch as he refused to credit the accounts he had heard, and yet almost feared, by a stricter investigation, to prove that they were but too true.

In the cool of the evening he once more strolled on his lawn; but the mighty Tors, tipped by the silvery beams of the moon, here and there, or stretching their huge forms in shadow, no longer attracted his notice. His mind was full of Mary Cope and her illness. He longed to ask her what the facts really were, but his dread that she had been in fault prevented him. "For," said he, to himself, "I must rebuke and reproach her; but not now, while she is ill and suffering."

Inadvertently the parson walked to the entrance gate; from thence he could see Mary's cottage. The moon shone full on that side of the village, leaving the vicarage and its grounds in the shade.

To his amazement and additional vexation, he saw Isaac Watson come away from Mary Cope's cottage. He saw him come reeling unsteadily down the street, his head hanging down, his appearance forlorn and uncared for, as was the case when Isaac had visited the "Pack-horse."

"Can it be? Is it so?" said the parson. "Isaac Watson a visitor to Mary Cope, and when his sad state is so plainly to be seen! Poor Mary! poor Mary!" groaned he, as he returned home even a sadder man than he had gone forth. "It's my own fault," mourned he. "Have I not wilfully shut my eyes to Isaac's intemperance? Have I not pleased myself with the hope that in time he would do better things than visit the cider-shop? This must not, nay, it shall not be. I will prevent their future intimacy. Could I not foresee that Isaac's manly appearance and handsome person would naturally attract such a girl as Mary Cape? Did I not know that Isaac was well read beyond his station? And is not Mary well read also? Has not Isaac the most magnificent voice in the whole parish, or in parishes for twenty miles round?—and has not Mary a splendid voice? Are

they not both thorough musicians?—both leaders in the choir? Is not he the most well-to-do man of his class for many and many miles round?—and is not Mary well-to-do? Dolt that I have been, to let these two come together under my very eyes, almost, as it may seem, with my very sanction! And now what can I do in the matter? for put a stop to their intimacy I will!"

CHAPTER X.

OF WIDOW MASON AND HER CUSTOMERS AT THE "PACKHORSE."

IT will be remembered that Isaac Watson set off to fetch help as soon as Mary Cope's wound was discovered; and that he went five miles without bringing back assistance. It was not much after two o'clock when Isaac started; it was between five and six when he returned.

"Isaac, lad, come in and sit down," said the widow, as she saw him stand moodily in the shed, doing nothing. "Here's a dish o' tea—come in, lad!"

"Mother," said Isaac in a hoarse voice, "is young Mistress Cope much hurt?"

"I think not, lad; but anyhow she have a-walked safe home with the t'other young meeden."

"I'll go and see how she is," said he; "and as you say Dr. Smith has gone through the village, perhaps I shall hear his opinion of her."

"But have a dish of tea first, Isaac, lad."

"No, thank you, I can't stay."

And Isaac set off to inquire after Mary Cope.

It so happened that, as Isaac neared the school cottage, Mr. Smith came out, and stood talking to some one within. To avoid meeting him, Isaac turned down an opening to the right; and as this led direct to the "Packhorse," he went in and called for a pint of cider, just to give time for Mr. Smith to finish his conversation, before he intruded himself into Mary Cope's presence.

"And I have heerd say as you have been a-hammering Peter Barker," said one of the frequenters of the "Packhorse" to Isaac.

"No, I have not," said Isaac.

"You have smashed young Mistress Cope," said the Widow Mason, who was the landlady of the "Packhorse."

Isaac looked angry, for the woman had touched a tender string, and with a woman's insight into character she quickly saw that her shaft had struck

home; and then with a woman's jealousy of another, younger and fairer than herself, she added, with too evident pleasure at the fact,

"Anyhow, you have spoiled she's beauty, Isaac."

"Maybe, I can't spoil yours!" said Isaac, angrily.

"Heyday!—Massy me!—Here's grander!" said the widow, rising from her chair, and confronting Isaac. "Maybe ye ca-an't spoil mine!" said she angrily, and mimicking Isaac. "Maybe ye sha-ant, ye lazy, hulking feller!—a-coming and a-drinking your fill, and a-never paying yer dues!"

"What!" said Isaac, in a voice of thunder, as he set down the empty tankard with a bang. "Do you say, widow, that I don't pay!"

"Yes, yes! I do say as you never pays!" And the widow tossed her head, and rushed out of the room.

"I do pay every time I come here," said Isaac in a tone of decision.

"Theere be a mighty lang score up to thy name, lad," said one of the old men sitting there.

"Widow, come here!" said Isaac, opening the door that led to an inner room. "Come here, face

to face. I say I do pay every time I come here."

The widow came forward with a red and shameless face, and a bold, unquailing eye, and dared Isaac to prove his words.

"I know that I pay," persisted Isaac.

"Yes, yes; in course you pays at first; and then you goes on and on, till you canna pay no longer. You be not in a fit state, you bean't, Mr. Isaac, and there be plenty knows it, let alone I; and you be one to cheat the poor widdy, be you? Why there be your score!"

And she pointed triumphantly to a long array of chalks on the back of the settle.

"Then tell me the amount, and I will pay it now," said Isaac, instinctively recollecting his late debauch, and feeling himself in the power of the enemy.

"Sit you down, Mister Isaac. It will take I a lang whiles to count up that lang row," said the widow. "Sit down, Mister Isaac, another time will do as well." For now that the widow had gained her point in making Isaac pay for his uncourteous speech, she was willing to retain him as a customer.

"No, no. I am going," said Isaac. "But pray let me know as soon as you can what I owe you." And he turned to go away, but the widow stopped him as she said,

"And must I chalk up this pint, Mr. Isaac?"

"Ah! I beg your pardon, widow, I forgot," said Isaac, as he fumbled first in one pocket, then in another; but, after some time of vain search, he was obliged to confess he had come out without money.

"And it be not the first time as you've a-done that, Master Isaac, only you just please to remember, as in course I don't mind—cos why? I knows you'll pay sometime, only when you says hard words to I, why, I gets a bit put out, I does—not as I'm such a very bad temper, most times."

And the widow looked round and laughed, expecting that the listeners would support her view of the case; and as those present were much indebted to her on certain occasions happening now and then, if they did not agree with, they did not venture to contradict her.

"I'll call to-morrow—Monday I mean," said Isaac, correcting himself—for he did not frequent the "Packhorse" on a Sunday, "and pay your bill."

"All right, all right, Mister Isaac," laughed the widow as Isaac departed.

And she inwardly congratulated herself on her foresight with regard to Isaac's score, and on the profit she had gained by taking offence at his words. She knew well his debt was a mere trifle, for Isaac was strict in his payments, but sometimes negligent in seeing the score obliterated.

And here we must state that Isaac Watson was a man with a healthful appetite generally speaking, and whose means allowed of a comfortable daily supply of animal food. His work was heavy and fatiguing, and he required suitable support during his hours of labour. At mid-day he was accustomed to restore exhausted nature by a plentiful meal; but on this day, so immediately after the intemperance of the previous night, his desire for nourishment had not returned, and the twelve o'clock meal was sent away untouched by him.

After the affray with Peter he set off on his long walk, and, as we have seen, on his return his mind was too anxious for the fate of Mary Cope to suffer him to bestow a thought on himself, and being accidentally prevented entering her cottage, he had gone to the "Packhorse."

He had made but a poor breakfast, and that before seven o'clock, and since then the pint of cider was the only restorative that had passed his lips. He would now have been glad of food, for the walk and the anxiety of his mind began to tell upon him. The Widow Mason's ill-treatment had prevented him from asking for bread and cheese there, as he might have done under other circumstances, and, as he walked on, he said to himself,

"I'll just stop at the school-cottage and inquire after Mistress Cope, and then go home and have some supper."

Poor Isaac! how one false step rapidly brings on another!—how sin in any form must meet with its punishment, be the sinner ever so wary! Isaac thought his yesterday's folly hushed up in the all-absorbing past—forgotten by all. He thought he had nothing to dread from the effects of it, the more so as that he had been well enough in the morning to return to his duties. But the consequences of his sin tracked him by the heel, and followed him in his future life more than he was then capable of foreseeing.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "WHERE THE BEE SUCKS" AND "SWEET HONEY-SUCKING BEES."

ISAAC knocked gently at Mary Cope's door. Susan Picard opened it, and in a glad tone of surprise said,

"Mr. Isaac! pray come in, pray do come in."

"I called to ask after Mistress Cope," said Isaac, humbly, and not daring to accept Susan's invitation.

"Come in, sir," said Susan.

But as Isaac still hesitated, she turned to Mary and said,

"Here is Mr. Isaac come to see how you are, Mary; must not he come in?"

"Yes, certainly, Susan; tell him I shall be glad to see him," said Mary.

Now, on any other occasion the prudent young mistress of the school assuredly would not have invited Isaac in. But several feelings combined in this instance to cause her glad acquiescence. One was that Susan might suppose there was a greater intimacy between Isaac and herself than there actually was, hoping by this means to lessen Susan's flirtations with him. But as this only proves Mary's little knowledge of human nature, it will not avail her much; for there are few things more pleasurable to a vain and foolish flirt like Susan Picard, than to attract the notice of men already supposed to be engaged.

Again, Mary was glad at the real interest in herself Isaac's call made prominent; and, moreover, the interior of her cottage was such a little paradise in comparison with Widow Simpson's, or indeed with most of the dwelling-houses in the village, that she gratified a very pardonable vanity in her desire that Isaac should see it. And so Isaac came forward; the tall, strong man, subdued in spirit, bending his head, and speaking in gentle tones to Mary Cope.

Susan was astonished at this change in Isaac—

thus quiet in speech and humble in manner; she could hardly think he was the same hearty, shouting, laughing, and joking Isaac with whom she had flirted so comfortably only three days ago. Susan was not more learned in human nature than her cousin Mary, or she would have known that powerful emotion takes away the eloquence of the tongue; and by Isaac's deference to, and subdued manner in the presence of Mary Cope, she would have read that her own pretty face and gay attire had made no impression on Isaac Watson's heart.

"I am sorry indeed to see you look so pale," said Isaac, addressing Mary. "I can never forgive myself, though indeed I had not the least intention of hurting you—I did not know you were there—shall you ever forgive me, Mistress Cope?" and Isaac stood, cap in hand, before Mary.

"But do sit down, sir," said Susan, placing a chair.

"Sit down, Isaac," said Mary.

And thus spoken to, he at last seated himself very uneasily on the edge of a chair, and listened attentively to Mary Cope's statement of Mr. Smith's opinion.

"But," continued she, "there's only one thing that much troubles me, Mr. Isaac, and that is the singing to-morrow."

Isaac shook his head as he said,

"There is not any one in the village that can supply your place."

"But, Mary, I can sing beautifully," said Susan.

"At all events you must not fret yourself, Mistress Cope," said Isaac.

"I can sing, I tell you," said Susan once more, and in a tone that showed her great desire to attract attention.

"Perhaps, then, you would be so kind as to lead the trebles for Mistress Cope," said Isaac.

"To be sure I would. Only tell me the tune, and I'll do it most beautifully. I can assure you I sing like Miss Louisa Pyne," said Susan.

But as this last piece of information was not at all understood by Isaac or Mary, the former proceeded with the important matter in hand.

"It is Purcell in A for the 'Venite,'" said Isaac; "and the 'Te Deum' will be——"

"It is the 'Benedicite' to-morrow," said Mary,

interrupting, "and to the fourth Gregorian. Will you get me the 'Parish Choir,' Susan; it is on the top shelf," said Mary.

But Isaac, anticipating Susan's movements, and, moreover, being taller and stronger, arose so hastily as to upset the chair which had hitherto served him for an uneasy resting-place; and in his eagerness to get the book, pulled from the row half a dozen others, which toppled one over another and fell to the ground. Then Isaac had to try to hide his confusion at this *contretemps* by picking up the books and replacing them, which, by some unlucky process or other, always tumbled down again the moment Isaac thought he had them all right. This made Susan titter, Isaac more sheepish than ever, and Mary Cope very grave.

"Will you give me the book you have in your hand?" said Mary rather crossly, and shaking her head at Susan; and when the "Parish Choir" was at length given to her, she busied herself so successfully in finding the chants that would be required for the morrow, that Isaac had time to recover from the effects of his awkwardness.

"Would you just sing over the 'Venite' with

Susan?" said Mary to Isaac, as she pointed out the chant to Susan and gave her the book.

"Yes, certainly," said Isaac, proud to find himself of use, and, taking his pitchpipe from his waistcoat pocket, he sounded the keynote.

"But what is this book for?" said Susan.

"Why, these are the notes of 'Purcell in A,' the chant for the 'Venite,' and Isaac will give you the keynote."

"La—a—a—" said Isaac, holding the note for Susan's better comprehension.

"But I don't know what you mean, Mary."

"You said you could sing!" said Mary, reproachfully.

"So I can!" said Susan proudly. "You should just hear me sing 'Where the bee sucks;' everybody says I do it most beautifully."

"The bee sucks?" said Isaac. "Don't you mean, Miss, 'Sweet honey-sucking Bees,' a charming madrigal," for Isaac's musical lore and Susan's were strangely different; and though "Where the Bee sucks" was a widely-known melody, he had never heard of it.

"No, no," said Susan, pettishly; "I mean

'Where the Bee sucks there lurk I,' Ariel's song from the 'Tempest;' it has nothing to do with 'Honeysuckles'—"

"But we don't want such stuff," said Mary, now becoming a little irritable.

"Stuff indeed!—why, it is lovely!—Mr. Isaac, I'll sing it to you—I am sure you will appreciate it." Isaac felt flattered by the compliment, and Susan sang without Mary making any attempt to prevent her.

She had, as she had said, a charming voice. She was accustomed to go frequently to public places of amusement in London, where she heard good music well sung. And though Susan was no musician, for she did not know a note of music, she had a good ear, and her companions in the shop in which she served being all more or less musical, it came to pass that Susan could sing many operatic songs.

There was no denying that Isaac Watson's closest attention was given to Susan the moment she opened her lips. Mary Cope instinctively hid her face, as she read Isaac's astonishment and delight.

Susan carolled away to her heart's content. The clear bell-like notes rose and fell on the ear, evidently entrancing the strong man. And when at length Susan's song ceased, Isaac heaved a deep sigh as he said enthusiastically,

"I never heard anything like that in my whole life!"

"I should think not," said Susan; "such songs cannot very well find their way to Lawsleigh; and if they did, there would be no voices to sing them!"

"Ah! you are right, you are right," said Isaac, "there is no voice like yours in these parts;" and, for the first time since his entrance into the cottage, he seated himself comfortably; and, forgetting Mary Cope, sat steadily gazing on Susan.

"You see, there is nothing about 'honeysuckles' in it," said Susan.

"Honeysuckles! no; but I spoke of the madrigal—'Sweet honey-sucking Bees,' said Isaac; 'honey-sucking'—not 'honeysuckles.'"

"Oh, yes; and what is a madrigal?"

"But Isaac, about to-morrow?" interrupted Mary Cope, whose eyes were wide open to the

flirtation going on in her very presence; and poor Mary felt very sad-hearted, in addition to her other troubles.

CHAPTER XII.

OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SUSAN PICARD'S LEARNING AND MARY COPE'S.

"I THINK we need not have any fear for to-morrow, Mistress Cope," said Isaac, replying to Mary's query. "What a splendid voice Miss Susan has!"

"Yes," said Mary; vexed though she was at Isaac's praise of Susan, she could not but acknowledge the truth. "But then, Isaac, had not Susan better try over 'Purcell in A'?"

"Certainly," said Isaac; "now then, miss," continued he, and addressing Susan, as he once again gave the key-note, lengthened out for her edification—"La—a—a—"

"But what is that to do?" said Susan, staring.

"That is the key-note, and you see 'Purcell

in A' begins on the third—'O come let us sing unto the Lord,'" sang Mary, "only I must not sing; I feel my head quite painful when I make the exertion."

Isaac's countenance now expressed the deepest compassion, and his voice sank into a low key as he said,

"No, no, don't sing; don't do anything that can cause you pain."

And then Susan, with a woman's quick eye, observing that Isaac's attention was gone from herself to Mary, immediately sang the very words and tune Mary had just given for her instruction, "O come | let us sing unto the Lord," and Isaac's educated ear at once turned to the attraction of her charming voice.

"Go on, miss—do go on," said Isaac, eagerly and heartily.

"Go on!—yes, you keep saying 'go on,' but go on with what, pray?" said Susan.

"With the 'Venite,' to be sure," said Isaac, standing up and holding the music of Purcell's chant before Susan's astonished eyes.

"But what *is* the 'Venite,' Mr. Isaac?—I never

heard of the song in all my life," said Susan, rather pettishly; "I know I can sing it, if you will but just tune it."

"Goodness me! Susan, dear, don't talk such nonsense," said Mary, looking vexed. "I know you are in the habit of going to church—that 'pig' affair was not so successful that you need to try another of the same kind."

"Mary, how can you say such things?" said Susan, now in her turn becoming excited. "Whether you believe me or not, I never did hear the 'Venite' song in my whole life, either at church—though of course they don't sing songs in churches—or anywhere else. I have often helped to sing 'O come let us sing unto the Lord,' just to some tune like that you did just now—often in church I have done that; but indeed I don't know the 'Venite' song."

Mary Cope saw in an instant that Isaac was surprised at Susan's ignorance, and she could not help feeling some gratification at her downfall in his good opinion. While Isaac, with true tact for the feelings of another, did not officiously point out to Susan what was meant by the word 'Venite;'

but after a moment or two of silence, broke the spell that seemed to have fallen upon them, by saying,

"Then, miss, if you will have the goodness to sing that psalm now, to this chant," pointing out Purcell in A, "I'll take up my part."

"That psalm?—what psalm?" said Susan.

"'O come let us sing unto the Lord,'" said Isaac; "but perhaps if you had a prayer-book you would sing more easily."

"Yes; of course. If you'll give me a prayer-book, and tell me all the tune, I can sing that psalm."

"Here is the chant," said Isaac; "that is the 'tune,' as you call it," continued he, as he once more held open a music-book before Susan.

"Do take away that great book," said she, pettishly.

Isaac looked dismayed, and Mary Cope smiled. She was quite woman enough to feel gladdened by the shortcomings of her rival.

"I think Susan wants to hear the whole of the chant, Isaac—will you sing it? I am afraid to attempt a note, my head aches so."

"Of course I will," said Isaac, kindly.

And in a high falsetto he sang through two or three verses of the "Venite."

Susan, who did not in the least comprehend the trouble Isaac and Mary were taking to render her superb voice useful on the morrow, and not possessing Isaac's fine intuitive tact for the feeling of others, Susan, on hearing the first notes, looked up in surprise, then began to titter; and this, unchecked, became a loud laugh by the time the tune was finished.

"Susan! Susan! what is there to laugh at?" said Mary, angrily; while Isaac, understanding he had made himself ridiculous in Susan's eyes, closed his mouth, and stood silent, and shy, and awkward.

"I can't help it," said Susan, still laughing rudely; "why, he sings like a woman!"

"He has done that to oblige you, Susan, or——"

"To oblige *you*, Mistress Cope," said Isaac, chafing; for he could not conceal the irritation he felt at the ridicule Susan so unsparingly bestowed upon him.

"Thank, you, Isaac," said Mary, much gratified, and not sorry at heart that Susan's conduct was gradually lowering her in Isaac's good opinion. "I can tell you, Susan," continued she, "Isaac has a very fine bass voice, and he only sang up there to help you, and to teach you Purcell's chant, because it makes me ill to sing."

"And that is just what I expected to hear, a fine manly voice; and then when those queer topsy-turvy pipes sounded, how could I help laughing?"

And again Susan did not attempt to restrain the expression of her mirth.

"I shall not be of much more use, eh, Mistress Cope?" said Isaac, feeling angry as well as crest-fallen; "and therefore I will say good night."

"There, Susan," said Mary, sorrowfully, clasping her hands, "now you have offended Isaac, and what am I to do for to-morrow?"

"Bless your heart, Mistress Cope!" said Isaac, heartily, "but I will not be the least bit offended if I can be of any service to *you!*"

With a slight accent on the pronoun; for he had been touched by her evident distress when he

attempted to go, and now felt proud at the implied compliment to himself. And Isaac reseated himself, and, after a little pause, said to Mary,

"I am quite willing to help Miss Susan, just for your sake, Mistress Cope."

And now that Susan's mirth had subsided a little, she saw she was in danger of losing her admirer, and in an instant made an attempt to recall him to herself, as she said,

"You are really very kind; and indeed, Mr. Isaac, I am quite ashamed of being so naughty; but I don't mean it,"—and she smiled a languishing smile as she continued—"and I'll try not to give you any more trouble; I think I know what you want me to do—that is, to sing this from beginning to end, to the same tune you did?"

And she pointed to the "Venite" in the prayer-book.

"Yes—yes, Susan; now do try," said Mary.

And then Susan began; and, to do her justice, she sang the psalm admirably, if we except an occasional trip at the end of the verses, which Isaac quickly corrected; and now joining his rich bass voice with hers, even though the harmonies were

not filled in, it was easy for Mary Cope, as she listened, to foretell that "to-morrow"—the "to-morrow" that weighed so heavily on her spirits—would be a day of triumph to Susan.

When the last notes of the "Gloria" died away, Isaac and Susan looked at each other.

"What a voice you have, Mr. Isaac," said Susan, glowing with the feeling of delight she had had in the two voices blended so well. "You really *do* sing beautifully!"

"It was most enjoyable, was it not, Mistress Cope?" said Isaac, much gratified, both with Susan's praise, and with the sound of his own voice combined with hers.

"Yes, Isaac," said Mary, again feeling as if the ground were receding from under her feet; "but it is getting late, would you just try the 'Benedicite'?"

"Certainly I will," said Isaac, eagerly. "Now, miss," continued he, holding the open music-book once more before Susan, and giving the key-note, "fa—a—a," lengthened out as he had done before.

"Now you are teazing me again with that

tiresome book; I tell you I hate the sight of it!" said Susan, tossing it aside.

Isaac shrunk back, feeling himself snubbed; and Mary Cope smiled, as she felt her footing a little more secure for the time being.

"Remember, Isaac, Susan does not sing from notes, therefore the music is of no use to her," explained Mary, and yet half ashamed of the satisfaction she felt in exposing Susan's ignorance to Isaac. "But will you be so kind as to sing the first verse of the 'Benedicite,' she will learn it by ear?"

"By ear!" said Isaac, in a loud voice of contempt, which, as truthful chroniclers, we must admit was gratifying to Mary. "And you want me to sing the fourth 'Gregorian,'" continued he, rather crossly, for he did not much like the thought of singing falsetto to be laughed at by Susan.

But Susan, with her woman's penetration ever on the watch, and understanding in a moment the reason of this change in Isaac, turned all to her own account, as she said, in a most flattering manner,

"Sing in your beautiful voice, Mr. Isaac. I shall know the tune just the same."

"Shall you, indeed," said he, staring at her, and greatly relieved by this announcement; for, in dealing with young untrained voices in the choir, Isaac had always been accustomed to give the exact note. Now, however, at Susan's request, he ran through the first verse of the "Benedicite" in his natural voice, and she took it up immediately, and chanted—"O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord, praise him and magnify Him for ever!" so exactly with Isaac's right appreciation and expression, as fully to content him, and make him quite forget he had looked ridiculous in her eyes only a few minutes previously.

And so Susan succeeded in the "Benedicite," and then there was only the "Jubilate" to be attended to; and as by this time her peculiarities were better understood by Isaac and Mary, they were not long in teaching her a third chant, when, to the surprise of all three, the church clock struck nine. Isaac started up as he said—

"I did not know it was so late."

"I am sure I did not," said Susan, "it is so

pleasant to be singing together, Mr. Isaac. I quite forgot the time, and I have so much enjoyed the music."

Isaac looked at her: not a particle of uncomfortable feeling at her former misbehaviour remained to take away from the pleasure he felt at his society being prized by so pretty a girl, and one who possessed so charming a voice as Susan Picard; for though Isaac was well known to be a great admirer of the fair sex, he was diffident of his own power of pleasing or attracting women.

"I am sure I am pleased, miss," said he heartily. "I never heard such a voice as yours; the notes are as clear and as round as the treble bell. It is a fine gift!—a fine gift! Is it not, Mistress Cope?"

"Yes. Susan has a magnificent voice," said Mary; "but I must thank you for so kindly coming to inquire for me, and for helping me so nicely out of my trouble for to-morrow. And please tell the widow I am doing very well, and Susan I am sure will thank you."

"'Tis nothing—nothing," said Isaac. "You

are welcome to anything I can do. Good night." And he moved towards the door.

Susan followed him, and could not resist the pleasure of a little flirtation there while the moon shone full upon Isaac, and he stood with admiring looks, listening to her little nothings. At length the last good night was said, the door shut, and Isaac walked away.

And now it was that he felt the full effect of having eaten nothing since twelve o'clock the day before. He reeled as he went along, but he knew it was from exhaustion. He had had a day of fatigue and anxiety, winding it up by two hours of singing.

"If I can but get home, and have some supper," thought he, "I shall be all right to-morrow."

It was at this moment that Parson Hill was gazing upon him with surprise and vexation: it was then that Parson Hill recorded the fact —"That he had seen Isaac Watson go from Mary Cope's cottage between nine and ten o'clock at night, and in a state of inebriety that rendered him almost unable to walk home."

CHAPTER XIII.

WHY PARSON HILL READ THE "VENITE," AND WHY THE CHOIR DID NOT SING.

AND the morrow came bright, and clear, and sunny, and the bells pealed forth through the rarefied air; but their pleasant sound did not as beforetime bring pleasurable emotions to the heart of Parson Hill.

"He is ringing, I can hear," sighed he, as he thought of Isaac. "But this affair shall not go on. I will make a public example of that man the first convenient opportunity. Mary shall feel ashamed of him and his deeds." And then as he recollected the aged widow, he continued—"I am grieved to my heart for the poor mother; but in this matter it will not do to let the grass grow under my feet. I wonder how the choir will manage to-day? They are not accustomed to sing without Mary; and of

course she cannot make her appearance. At all events, I can read the 'Venite' and 'Jubilate,' and, fortunately for me, the congregation can respond." And thus soliloquising, Parson Hill went forth to his duty at the usual hour.

Meanwhile, the children belonging to the choir had assembled at Mary's cottage-door, and she gave them in charge of Susan, admonishing them to be good girls and sing their best—the more so as she herself would not be there to guide them. But on the way to church, and while what Widow Simpson, in the language of former days, called "the bidding bell," was ringing, Isaac Watson came forth from the belfry, and joined Susan and her bevy of girls.

"Good morning, miss; and how is Mistress Cope?" said he.

"She is quite well, thank you, sir," said Susan, forgetting, in the delight she felt at being noticed by Isaac, that Mary Cope was ill.

"Quite well!" said Isaac, in surprise.

"Oh! of course, I mean she is better; but, Mr. Isaac, shall you sit next to me?" simpered Susan.

"Sit next to you, miss! Why, what do you

mean? I must sit in my proper place in the choir, and you in Mistress Cope's place."

"Why, I hope you will sit next to me, because you will have to give me the note to begin."

"Give you the note!—no such thing; the treble voices lead—you must find the proper pitch yourself."

"But I don't know how, Mr. Isaac," said Susan in much distress.

"I thought you understood what you had to do," said Isaac, looking troubled, and not the less so when Parson Hill passed hastily, and took no notice either of him or his pretty companion.

"So the parson knows I was at the 'Packhorse,'" said Isaac's conscience, for he thus interpreted the neglect with which he was treated.

"Yes, I do perfectly understand," replied Susan; "but you gave me the note—you put it up to your ear, and then sung out."

"Put it up to my ear!" said Isaac, becoming more and more uneasy the nearer they approached the church.

"Yes, the what-do-you-call-it—you had it in your waistcoat pocket."

Isaac instinctively felt in his pocket, and drew forth a pitch-pipe.

"It is the 'pipe' you are meaning, miss," said he, greatly relieved.

"Yes, that is it; and so you see you must give me the note to begin with."

"No, I must not do that. But if Mistress Cope has forgotten to give you hers, if you please, miss, I will lend you mine," said he, gallantly offering the tiny instrument to Susan, "and then you will be able to begin—to lead off, I mean."

"Thank you, Mr. Isaac, how very kind you are; now I shall do wonders—of course I shall."

"Of a certainty you will," said Isaac confidently, and in a whisper, for they were just entering the church.

The service was intoned, and after listening and finding out for herself what others were doing, Susan took up the note, and joined the congregation in reading the responses, her mellifluous bell-like voice ringing through the whole building, to Isaac Watson's intense satisfaction and delight, to Parson Hill's great surprise, and to the ill-concealed astonishment of the inhabitants of Lawsleigh.

At lengh it was time to commence the "Venite." The choir stood ready with their open books, the parson occasionally resting his eyes inquiringly upon them, the congregation looking on, and mutely marvelling at the sudden stop in the service; and Isaac Watson bending his large and tall person forward, looking at Susan, and straining his ears to catch her first note; while Susan, hot and uncomfortable, stood up holding Isaac's pitch-pipe to her ear. As the fork emitted no sound, she untied her bonnet, and put it closer to her ear. But as all this had taken more time than it was customary to waste in a church between one part of the reading and another, Parson Hill surmised that something was going wrong, and commenced reading the "Venite," to which the congregation responded; and in due time it came to an end.

Poor Isaac Watson was ready to sink into the earth at the thought of the choir being disgraced in that public way—by seemingly its own neglect; and Susan Picard, as she afterwards said, "could not for the life of her find out what was the matter."

During the reading of the first lesson, Isaac

sent a message to Susan, passed from one to another through the choir, to the purport that "she would be pleased to send his pipe."

"Tell him I shall not," replied Susan.

Isaac sent a second message, more peremptory than the first, and Susan returned the same answer. But then Isaac, though well-known in Lawsleigh to be a "shamefaced" man, screwed up his courage, left his place in the choir, and went, in the eyes of the whole congregation, to speak to Susan. He was determined, at any personal sacrifice, to prevent a second mishap.

Wise Isaac Watson!

"I must have my pipe, miss," said Isaac, whispering.

"What a useless, senseless thing it is," said she, angrily; "it cannot give out a sound."

"Give it me back."

"Here, then," said she, offering it to him, and then mischievously withdrawing it, as Isaac attempted to take it.

"This is no place for tom-fool-eries, miss," said Isaac, brusquely; "and if you don't give it me, I will walk out of the church."

"Oh! pray, Mr. Isaac, don't do that. But indeed I can't hear it emit a sound."

"Give it me back," said Isaac.

"But why can't I make it useful?—it guided you."

"Perhaps you don't pinch it."

"Pinch it!" said Susan, trying the effects of one. This she now discovered was the secret—she heard the note, and delightedly exclaimed, "Thank you!—oh! thank you, Mr. Isaac. Now you must leave it with me—well, I never thought to find such good in a pinch!"

"Hush!" said Isaac; "and I think I had better have——"

"When you know I can sing so well," said Susan, reproachfully; "you *must* leave it with me."

Isaac stood for a second or two irresolute; but Susan again pleaded, and he at length allowed her to keep it, reminding her, as he turned away, that she must begin the fourth Gregorian.

And the strong man, with all his wisdom, was once again bound helpless by the words and looks of the pretty woman.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW SUSAN PICARD TRIUMPHED OVER ALL DIFFICULTIES, AND HOW ISAAC WATSON LONGED FOR HIS PIPE.

"I DON'T care a bit what you call it," thought Susan; "Glorian or Uproarian, all the same to me—I know I can do it."

But Susan had still another difficulty to conquer, of which she was in perfect ignorance. It is true she now knew how to obtain a note from the pitch-fork, or pitch-pipe; but she did not know that from that she should take the key-note of anything she wished to sing. It was sufficient for her that the pipe distinctly gave a note on which she could begin. And when the long lesson was over, she pinched the fork, heard the note, and immediately commenced the "Benedicite" to the

fourth Gregorian upon C in the space, the note the fork had given her.

For an instant, as was but natural, the choir wavered; but Isaac, feeling instantaneously what Susan had done, and foreseeing a terrible break-down if she was not supported, dashed in with his bass, roaring like a bull, rather than singing like a man. It was evident to all who saw or heard Isaac, that he was very much excited and very angry. Only one or two others ventured to join, and this compelled Isaac, as it seemed, to sing the louder, and thus try to make up for the absence of many voices.

After the first few verses, Parson Hill, who was an excellent musician, recovered from the shock of hearing the "Benedicite" led off four notes higher than it ought to be; and he, also, like Isaac, having the vision of a crash floating in his imagination, joined in the chant, and assisted in keeping the choir together.

Parson Hill's example—for he did not usually sing during the service—was not lost; and soon the trebles, tenors, and basses one by one began to sing; so that by the time the "Benedicite"

drew near the end, the entire choir was singing its loudest, Susan Picard attaining a great triumph, and Isaac Watson heartily lamenting the unlucky moment that he had yielded to Susan's entreaties, and left his pitch-pipe in her hands.

When at length the overtaxed choir ceased, and reseated themselves, Isaac busied himself in wiping away the heavy drops of perspiration that accumulated rapidly, in spite of his efforts to stop them. His mind was running on the "Jubilate," for he foresaw that Susan would lead off again upon C—the note given her by the pipe—and, to his additional vexation, he remembered the chant he had selected for the "Jubilate" was in the key of C, and began on the dominant, so that it would again be raised four notes higher. He dared not again venture to Susan, for, besides the discomfort to himself of going to her in the face of the whole congregation, he intuitively felt that he should gain nothing by it. He felt that, by some means or other, she would manage to retain the pipe, and send him back as he came.

Wise Isaac Watson!

While Isaac was thus uncomfortably summing

up his past miseries, and looking forward to more, Parson Hill also was recalling the past, and looking into the future. He was conscious he had in his own mind accused Isaac of making visits to Mary Cope; but now he must change his opinion, for he had seen Isaac walking to church with Susan Picard, and seen, also, that little episode of his attention to her in the church.

"It is the London belle that attracts the handsome smith," said Parson Hill to himself. "I have misjudged him—I thought he had more taste."

And he was so comforted by this turn of events, and so satisfied with Isaac's efforts to keep the choir from a break-down, that he magnanimously determined once more to forgive him all his past offences, and help him in his present dilemma. The fact that Isaac Watson did not wish to appropriate Mary Cope, made his mind easy; and when he again joined his rich voice in the chant, there was not in the whole congregation a voice more hilarious or jubilant than Parson Hill's. A great weight had been taken from his mind. He enjoyed this freedom from perplexity, and revelled in his own happiness.

Wise Parson Hill!

But to return. Exactly as Isaac had anticipated, so it happened. Susan raised the chant four notes, and though he was prepared for this dilemma, he was so completely unstrung by the extraordinary slips of the morning, that when he made the attempt as before to bellow forth a hearty bass, his notes came out wavering, unsteady, and jerking, very unlike Isaac's usually clear, sonorous, and excellent singing. By degrees the choir took up their parts, but as the "Jubilate" is much shorter than the "Benedicite," Susan sang the greater part without any assistance from the trebles, much to her own great delight.

At length the service came to an end, and no one was more relieved by this fact than Isaac Watson, who almost made up his mind that he would never enter the choir again. It must be taken into consideration that Isaac was a shy man, and to be thus publicly lowered in the opinion of the entire inhabitants of Lawsleigh, and from no fault of his own, was almost more than he could bear.

Susan, on the contrary, quite unconscious of all the misery she had occasioned, or of all the trouble

she had given, plumed herself on her own performance, held her head high, and felt, as was really the case, that she had acquired a great success. She did not know that she must except from her admirers Parson Hill and Isaac Watson. On returning from church, the villagers complimented her. Hannah Barker knew Susan, and joined her as she said,

"Yours be a sweet voice, surely, miss—you sing like to a bird," and then she turned to speak to another, and said, "Gude morning, Widdy Mason, and how be you?—I have a-been telling miss as her sings like to a bird."

"Like to a bird!" said the Widow Mason.

"Moore like to a angel, I say; and Hannah, she's a-gotten the angel's face, anyhow. And pray, miss, and how bees Mistress Cope? I be a-told as she's a-had she's face spoiled."

"Mary's better this morning, thank you," said Susan, much charmed with the notice she attracted, though, upon examining the Widow Mason, she did think her a great fat, red-faced woman, and very vulgarly dressed. But Susan was fond of praise, and even from this woman it was welcome.

"Her's better, is her? Her's a pert minx anyhow," said the widow, turning to her friend; "and I shouldna care much if she's face be a-spoiled out and out; not that it was ever so much of a face, only to have a gude big sore on she's cheek, and all a-swelled, and she's eyes bunged up a bit, must put she down. And most times 'tis that as she wants, Hannah, to be put down—coz, you see, th' passon makes such a fuss of she."

Susan did not hear all the Widow Mason said, or understand even what she did hear, but thinking the widow and Hannah Barker would be glad to know Mary was doing well, she said,

"Mary quite means to go to the school to-morrow—it was Dr. Smith said she had better not sing to-day," and Susan simpered, and looked conscious of her own good voice.

"Ay, miss. And it be a gude thing as her didna sing the morn," said the widow; "and such a angel's voice to sing for she! And sure, miss, you be a-going to sing again the afternoon? And yours be a bonny face! Now, if you had spoiled your face—but you havena—I should have been

sorry; but that minx, Molly Cope—and for why is her to be called Mistress, pray?—such a stuck up thing! I can't bide she—no, I can't."

Susan, though delighted with the flattery to herself, did not understand why evil must be said of Mary; but as Hannah was going one way to her home, and the widow another, Susan turned to meet Isaac and his mother, who she saw were coming slowly from the church.

"Good morning, Mrs. Simpson—how do you do?" said Susan, quite unconscious that she had bestowed an unusual epithet on the old woman.

The dwellers on the moor were all called by their Christian names, except in cases of widowhood, when the distinctive word "widow" belonged to the bereaved woman. This in part accounts for the Widow Mason's jealousy of Mary Cope's claim to the title of "Mistress;" but Mary herself was unaware that this was an offence in the eyes of the inhabitants of the moor, and Parson Hill had not foreseen that to call her "Mistress Cope" would cause any misunderstanding or ill-will, especially as no one thought of disputing her claim to the title of "schoolmistress."

"Thank you, miss—I be cheery," said the widow.

"Didn't the singing go well, Mr. Isaac?" said Susan.

"Well!" said Isaac, in such a tone of astonishment and annoyance as to make Susan start; and then he added, in a tone of entreaty, "Oh! miss, do give me my pipe!"

"But I shall want it for the afternoon, Mr Isaac; and you know you promised Mary you would come between the services and teach me the tunes you want me to sing."

"No—no; I tell you—no. Just please to give me my fork," said Isaac.

"No. I shall certainly want it again, so I shall not give it up; and I shall do my very best this afternoon—I shall astonish even you," and Susan looked at Isaac with a smile that she intended should say, "How can you refuse me!" But Isaac either did not understand the language of the eyes, or he was intent on having his own way, for all the reply he made was,

"Give me my pipe."

"Everybody says I sing beautifully—quite like

an angel, Mr. Isaac—they do really," added she emphatically, as she caught an incredulous expression creeping over Isaac's face. And after a pause, as Isaac said nothing, she continued in a tone of reproach,

"And you yourself said the very same thing last night, Mr. Isaac."

"Ay, ay! Mercy me!" said Isaac, shaking his head in a comfortless way. "But now I want my fork."

"Well, then, you have given up thinking I have a charming voice?" said Susan, paying no attention to Isaac's reiterated query. "Why, how strange and fickle you are! for say whatever you will, it positively rang through the church."

"Yes, miss, you have an excellent voice," said Isaac, thinking to satisfy Susan and his own conscience at the same time; and then he added afterwards, as if he would not be cajoled out of his rights, "but I want my pipe."

"Yes, miss; yours be a 'stonishing voice," said the widow; "a-piping up to the top so cheery and clear."

"Then you will come to Mary's cottage, Mr.

Isaac?" pleaded Susan, taking no notice of the widow's complimentary speech, in her anxiety to secure Isaac.

"Ay, miss, in course he'll come," said the widow. And then turning to Susan, and speaking in a whisper, she added—"He is that shy as is 'stonishing; but maybe he'll come in spite of that."

"If you please, miss, do give me my pipe," said Isaac humbly, as they arrived at that part of the road where their routes diverged.

Susan held up the coveted pipe, and laughed, as she walked away, saying,

"You must come, Mr. Isaac, if only to fetch this."

And with a sigh, that almost amounted to a groan, Isaac walked home with his grandmother.

CHAPTER XV.

HOW SUSAN PICARD BECAME MISTRESS OF LAWSLEIGH SCHOOL, *vice* MARY COPE, DISMISSED ON ACCOUNT OF ILL HEALTH.

SEVERAL of the choir went to Isaac's house, as soon as they had despatched their early dinners, but they all failed in their attempts to induce him to go with them to Mary Cope's, and so to try and put Susan Picard under some sort of restraint, and thus prevent her from destroying the beauty of the music. Isaac seemed to think—"The better part of valour was discretion." He foresaw all his pains and trouble would be thrown away. Susan's entire ignorance of the science of music, or even of musical notes, would render all his exertion useless, and he should again, in all probability, be humiliated.

The choir, therefore, eventually agreed amongst themselves that Susan should be kept in ignorance of the chants they intended to use; that one of the boys who sang treble should be taken to sit with the men, and by them be made to lead, so that they would be independent of Susan Picard's fine voice.

"Necessity is the mother of invention," saith the proverb; for Isaac had not thought of this very simple arrangement until he had been made so uncomfortable by Susan's errors.

And so the Sunday came to an end, and the afternoon services at the church were much more enjoyable to Isaac Watson than those of the morning, and the chants were sung in the keys intended by the writers of them; but still there was no denying that Susan Picard's voice was charming in the ears of all who appreciated sweet sounds.

In the evening "the School Cottage," as Mary's house was called, was beset by all who strolled forth for their Sunday's walk; and amongst others came Parson Hill himself. A few words of explanation from Mary satisfied him that she had not been to blame at the time when the accident

happened; and having, as we have seen, settled in his own mind that it was Susan Picard, and not Mary Cope, to whom Isaac was a visitor on the preceding Saturday night: and also having made himself happy by coming to this conclusion, he was able to make amends to Susan for any imaginary insult she had received from him on the morning she had visited the school, by heartily praising her magnificent voice, and thanking her, in the presence of all assembled there, for the service she had rendered the Lawsleigh choir during the absence of Mary Cope. And Parson Hill left Susan Picard convinced that she had made a great mistake—viz., that he was not a "'orrid man;" for at all events he understood music, and appreciated her voice.

And when the long day was fairly over, Isaac's anxiety as regarded the choir at an end, Parson Hill doubly happy in the thought that Mary was not in fault, as had been represented to him, and that Isaac's visit was to Susan—and the inhabitants of the village of Lawsleigh gradually sinking into repose—there were two who were unable to sleep: Susan, because she could not

cease to think of her great triumph, and of the admiration she had excited; and Mary, from a creeping dread of the entire annihilation of her hopes in the future.

As a rule Mary was not of an envious or jealous disposition, but the large amount of worship given to her cousin in her presence, joined to Susan's exaggerated account of her own doings, almost made Mary wish she had taken the services upon herself, although she by no means felt equal to the exertion.

On Saturday she had disquieted herself in anxiety for the Sunday; and yet her place had been filled up, and she herself left to the rest she required. When she recalled this fact, she felt ashamed of her jealousy of Susan. And now she troubled herself with thoughts of the morrow—Monday. Poor Mary, she was like many others, swayed by human feebleness; and so her mind was full of "how she should manage with the school to morrow." She knew she was disfigured—that she looked weary, and felt ill.. At another time she would hardly have cared for this change in her personal appearance; but as her strength of body

had succumbed, so her mind was less steadfast; and foreseeing from instinct that the young villagers were much more likely to laugh at the great patch on her forehead, and at her swollen face, than to sympathize with her sufferings; and having had plenty of proof that the villagers, with the vicar at their head, were Susan's most devoted admirers, and concluding, therefore, that Isaac Watson must be completely charmed, she suffered these things together to render her unhappy and dissatisfied in the present, and to crush her hopes in the future.

When she at length slept, she was pursued in her dreams by failure in all she undertook, and by the vision of Susan triumphantly resident in the village, as schoolmistress and leader of the choir!

But the morrow came. On Monday morning at nine o'clock the village schoolroom was prepared for the reception of the scholars by its young mistress, Mary Cope.

As Susan's dislike to Parson Hill had quite melted away after his complimentary speeches, she consented to go with Mary and try to help her; and as the latter was very reluctant, in the present state of her health, to be left alone, Susan re-

mained at the school. She thought her magnificent voice had captivated the parson as well as his flock; and she was not unwilling to add to her former triumph by giving him a chance of bestowing his praises in the presence of the school. And in due time Parson Hill made his appearance. He told Mary "he was glad to see she was able to resume her duties, and by the following Sunday he hoped she would be well enough to lead the choir, and thus preserve the voice he had heard so mellifluous in the Church from wasting its sweetness on the hoary Tors of Dartmoor, and allow it to return in its pristine freshness to entrance the cognoscenti of the metropolis."

The business of the school commenced. At length a ragged and dirty-looking little girl went up to Parson Hill with her spelling. He started back, apparently in extreme surprise, and after surveying the child steadily for a second or two, he said,

"Turn round—back this way."

The child turned and stood with its back to him, and after a few seconds more of deliberate survey, he said,

"Turn again—face this way;" and when the child obeyed, he continued, "and pray has your mother hands?—has she two hands like these?' exhibiting his own to the child.

"Yes, sir," said she.

"Then she has not any water?—she has not any soap?"

"Don't know, sir."

"Has she no thread?—no needles?"

"Don't know, sir," again said the child, now showing symptoms of agitation.

"Mary Cope, is the school full of work?" said he.

"No, sir; there was but little to do last week; now there is no sewing left."

"Then mend this child; and there is another and another," said he, as he pointed out those children whose garments were in rags and disorder.

"The old story," muttered he to himself—"all things, substances, people, want mending on this earth. What a marvellous place heaven must be, where all things are perfect—perfect," thought he. "And, Mary," continued he aloud, "I do think

this kind young lady will help you—she looks good-natured, and—and wishful to oblige. I should like to ask you a favour," said he to Susan, in the most deferential tone; and she, radiant with the inward satisfaction his flattery had excited, said,

"I am sure I shall be very happy if I can do anything to oblige you."

"Thank you," said he, bowing; "you *can* oblige me. I see that Mary is already tired with the exertion she has made, and I shall indeed be indebted to you," added he, courteously, "if you will supply her place here as well as you did at church yesterday—just for this one morning. The repose will do Mary good; and I trust the exercise of mind do you no harm," and again the parson bowed. "If you will become the head of this large establishment," and here he drew himself up to his full height, and spread out his hands as if he were indicating an extensive domain, instead of a simple village school filled with ragged and dirty children, "and allow Mary Cope to return home."

After a few seconds of ineffectual thought on

Susan's part, to make a proper reply to Parson Hill's speech, she was saved the trouble, for he turned to Mary and said,

"I see your friend grants my request, Mary; go you therefore to the repose you so much need. And, children," continued he, thus calling the attention of the school, "here is your new mistress for the time being—Mistress Susan Picard, *vice* Mistress Mary Cope, on sick leave."

Mary left the school; but Susan felt a strange, disagreeable feeling come over her as she heard her new title from the lips of Parson Hill; she did not like to be called "Mistress."

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW PARSON HILL INSTRUCTED MISTRESS SUSAN PICARD IN HER NEW DUTIES; AND HOW THE NEW BOY, JOE SANDS, ENJOYED HIS FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL.

SUSAN was promoted to Mary's chair.

"Now, ragged and dirty little child," said Parson Hill, "go to Mistress Susan Picard," and it seemed to Susan he singled out the dirtiest and most untidy child in the school. As Susan did not know what was required of her, Parson Hill went to her assistance.

"You see these holes in this child's frock?"

Susan assented.

"It is now your duty, as representing Mistress Mary Cope, to take this garment from the child—

in other words, to unfrock her, and teach her to mend it."

And Susan fancied the parson's voice was already less suave than it had previously been.

"But she is *so* dirty!" stammered Susan, in dismay.

"True, O young lady—that is, Mistress Susan Picard, she *is* dirty; but bring her this way, we will mend even that—come, come, come, dirty child—come, Mistress Susan Picard."

And Parson Hill led the way to a natural spring, flowing from a rock at a few paces from the entrance to the school.

"Now, if you please, Mistress Susan Picard," and the parson bowed and spoke in his most courteous tones, "make clean the dirty child—oh-h! we will mend, mend—we will mend!"

For one moment Susan hesitated; but thought is rapid, and she feared, if she resisted this, some worse scrape would happen to her. She therefore began to untie the child's frock, while the vicar called out lustily,

"Jane Hanmer, bring soap and towels."

And Susan now set herself to work in earnest,

washed the dirty child, and returned to the school-room sore at heart and sadly discomfited.

Her next task was, *not* to mend the soiled garment of the child, for that would have been comparatively easy, but to teach the little thing to do it. As the child could not sew well or darn at all, it happened, naturally enough, that Susan had a great deal of trouble; and Parson Hill amused himself, unknown to her, by watching and observing that every time Susan took the frock in her own hand, ostensibly to show the child what to do, she herself darned several rows up and down; by which means the long tear progressed very quickly; and whenever Susan thought Parson Hill's attention was entirely withdrawn from herself—though, in point of fact, this never happened—her nimble fingers stitched away at their topmost speed, in the hope of the sooner getting rid of the nasty, dirty, smelling frock, and very stupid and dull little child.

Susan expected to find the acute and painful sharpness, or knowingness, of a London child; she met only the stolid obtuseness of unawakened intellect in the Dartmoor born.

"I should not care one bit hearing them say their lessons," thought she to herself; "but this 'orrid, dirty, ragged, stupid child to be washed and darned—it is quite abominable!"

If Susan had set herself to work with alacrity and apparent good humour, to a task altogether at variance with her former habits or her present desires, no one would more have appreciated such self-sacrifice than Parson Hill, or have more highly rewarded it on a fitting opportunity; but as it was, few could have had more pleasure than he in thus humbling pretensions to fine ladyism, and affectations in dress he thought unbecoming to one in Susan's position. When Susan's labour was drawing to a close, she took opportunities occasionally of watching what Parson Hill was doing, and his actions and conversation only the more convinced her that, after all, her original opinion was the right one.

It happened, soon after the opening of the school, and before the arrival of Parson Hill, that one of the boys, a new comer, had been unruly, and Mary Cope had placed him in the middle of the room standing on a stool, the customary

punishment for some kinds of insubordination.

When Parson Hill entered, he did not apparently bestow any notice on this boy; but during the exercises of a class of boys, in which they were called upon to explain what was meant by being "at ease," and to which one replied, "To sit us down when us is tired," and another, "When us has got no hurts," and to which one brisk boy answered, "To sit, or to stand, or to lie down, just where us likes;" and to him Parson Hill said, "Then I conclude the boy standing on the stool in the middle of the room is a friend of yours, and that he agrees with you in opinion; I conclude he has pleased himself in occupying that conspicuous position, but I humbly confess I should not be 'at ease' so placed. It is true there is no accounting for taste," added he in a conciliatory tone. "Perhaps that boy likes to be looked at, therefore he is 'at ease.'"

The boy coloured and held his head down.

"If he enjoys things in a different form from others, I do not wish to dispute his right to do so. He has my permission to continue to stand there, since we may infer it adds to his happiness; but I do

not enjoy standing on a stool—do you, Jack?" addressing a great boy.

"No, sir."

"Tastes differ, as I said before," said Parson Hill, blandly.

"But why do not you, Jack?"

"Coz folks stares so."

"Exactly," said the parson with a smile; "well, new boy," continued he, addressing the culprit, "what is your name?"

"Joe Sands, sir."

"The clock is about to strike twelve. Do you know, Joe Sands, we are going to leave this room?"

"Yes, sir," said the boy, now roaring loudly.

"Would you like to stand there until we return at two?"

"No, no, no!" bawled the boy.

"Pray do not distress yourself," said the parson kindly; "if you had wished to remain here longer, standing at your 'ease,' I would have given you permission."

"Please, sir, I don't."

"Very well; I quite understand. What then,

new boy, Joe Sands—what would you wish to do?"

"Please sir, to goo hoome."

"Go—go home, new boy, Joe Sands."

But by this time the boy had left the school, and Parson Hill, speaking to those remaining, said,

"The new boy is evidently impatient to tell of his first day's experience of our school. It may be different in some things from his previously-formed opinion, and his friends may wonder when they learn that, of his own free will, he placed himself above every boy here."

Parson Hill bowed to Susan, and told her when the clock struck twelve she might dismiss the school.

When Susan returned home she was very angry. She never had been so treated in all her life; she never would go near to that abominable school again. And as for Parson Hill, Mary might say what she pleased, but he was, without exception, the most disagreeable, the most tormenting, and the most 'orrid man she had ever met with. He treated those poor children most shamefully; and if

he treated Mary as he had done herself, she could only say that Mary deserved it for putting up with it. In point of fact, he ought to be "shewn up" in the *Times*; and when she got back to town—which, she was happy to say, would be in a few days—she would just see after "a leader" on the subject of Dartmoor parsons, and so let the world know of their cruelties.

"And then again," resumed she, "even Dartmoor itself was a very much over-rated place! If people knew exactly what it really was, instead of what it was supposed to be—something grand and and glorious, she imagined—if only they knew it as she had seen it, they would never come near it. There were no omnibuses, no cabs, no theatres, no great singers, no public gardens, no parks, no shops, no churches—only one—and almost no people. And it was so still and quiet, it made her quite nervous; and as for the heaps of tipsy men, they were a disgrace to Old England."

When Susan ceased speaking, Mary ventured to ask what she meant by a "leader."

"A leader! Don't you know what I mean by a leader? Why, how very ignorant you must be!

Everybody reads the "leading article" on this or that question, and everybody talks of it, and not only one day, Mary, but every day in the year. And you don't know what I mean! Well, you are ignorant!"

"Then tell me, Susy, what is it about?" said Mary, simply, "and where is it to be found?"

"It is about everything," said Susan, with enthusiasm, "and it is to be found everywhere! Give me to-day's *Times*, and I'll soon show you a leading article."

"Oh—h! if it is in a newspaper," said Mary, "of course I am not likely to know, because I never see newspapers."

"No, you have no newspapers, actually no *Times!*" and Susan lifted up her arms in the greatness of her astonishment—"no *Punch!* no *Fun!*" and then Susan laughed uncontrollably as she reiterated, "no fun, no fun—I am quite sure you have no fun, you are so solemn and steady." And here she tried to pull her features into an expression of demureness, but failing in this, she made the room ring with her hearty peals of laughter as she said, "No *Punch*, no 'Punch and Judy,'—they

are quite different, Mary, though you don't know even that. No *Cassell*, no *Leisure Hour*—oh—h! what a mistake, why, all your hours are leisure! But, indeed and in truth, you have no anything that civilized people have! Mary, you may believe me or not, but this is the most dreadfully dull and disagreeable place on the face of the earth; and I cannot help saying, though it may seem ungrateful, that I shall be most thankful to get back to Regent Street and to life."

Susan clasped her hands joyfully as she finished her speech, and Mary looked grave. Mary had often had the best of the argument in conversations with Susan. She had often marvelled at her ignorance of things generally well-known; and sometimes she had prided herself that her cousin fell in the opinion of others for the want of knowledge such as she herself possessed. But now Susan had fairly turned the tables, for Mary had never heard of a "leading article" or seen a "leader," or even knew what either was, or the difference, if any, between them. And then, too, Susan had hinted something about the harm that one or both could do to Dartmoor parsons; which at first struck Mary

with a little awe, for, though she was not born on the moor, she had never known anybody in the whole world so powerful as Parson Hill.

But Mary's reverie on this important subject was brought to a close by the appearance at the cottage of a third person.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHICH TREATS OF SUSAN PICARD'S OPINION OF PARSON HILL.

WHILE Susan's anger was at its height, and Mary Cope engaged in clearing away the remains of dinner, James Marvel put his head in at the open window, as he had done on the previous Saturday morning, and said,

"Aweel, aweel!—so you are mighty busy, Mistress Cope?"

"Oh! Mr. Marvel, do come in!" said Susan; "you never finished telling me of Parson Hill's abominable treatment of you."

"Eh, lassie! what be that yer saying?"

"You were telling me, when you were here last, how very ill the parson behaved to you."

"No, no," said James, shaking his head—"I never said any ill of the minister."

"Yes, you did—you said he horsewhipped you."

"I said as the minister telled me to fetch his whip."

"To be sure you did; and now, Mary," said Susan, "did you ever hear in all your life of anyone behaving so disgracefully? In London no person would bear it—that is, no one who had ever read 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' and that is everybody. It is even worse treatment than the poor slaves have in America! Why, Mr. Marvel, why don't you show him up in the *Times*?"

"Show—him—in—the *Times!*" said James, slowly. "I have never seen a pictur of the minister, but that is a gude idea, miss. I am thinking the *Times* Noos would look very well with a pictur of the minister to its head."

"Dear me!" said Susan, "how ignorant people are! Surely, Mr. Marvel, you have never been in London, and perhaps never seen the *Times!*—there are no pictures in the *Times*. *Punch* has very good ones, and *Fun* is excellent; there is *Diogenes*, too, and there are many illustrated papers quite

wonderful to see, but the *Times* is not illustrated."

"Mercy me, miss!—never seed the *Times* Noos?—aw, aw, aw!—and Lon'on Ceety I have seed afore you was born."

"Well, never mind that," said Susan, seeing her error, and therefore willling to change the subject; "just finish your own story."

"There is no much to tell," said James.

"You have told me quite enough to raise my resentment," said Susan, smarting under the fancied indignities she herself had suffered. "To think that any one should dare to treat a fellow-creature as you have been treated, Mr. Marvel!—and when we know we are all equal!—you have just as good a right to horsewhip him as——"

"Law, massy me!—horsewhip the master!—and what for, then?"

"Because he horsewhipped you."

"He didna, I tell you!" said James, bringing his fist heavily down on the window-sill. "It be true as he worrited about them there strawberries, and I goed off to grandfather, and axed him to lend me a hand-glass to cover up some roots, and so force them to come early, and grandfather

lended me a glass; and then the weather come fine, and I watered my strawberries, and taked such care on them, as my master had a-got them a whole fortnight afore the rest of the neighbourhood."

"I am sorry for it," said Susan—"heartily sorry! I wish he had never seen another strawberry as long as ever he had lived!"

"But then, miss, don't you see the minister did me much gude. He made a mon of me whiles I was but a lad—I grew so sharp after everything, and set myself a-doing everything. At first I did these ways only to keep off such worrits for ever and ever; but then I soon found the gude of it, and soon got to have a great pride in doing everything the bestest way, and a-having everything the first of anybody in the whole country round. It was a fine plan—a fine plan!"

"Well, I never!" said Susan—"a fine thing to be horsewhipped!"

"Massy me, miss!—aw, aw, aw!—why, that there was all gammon."

"Gammon! I am sure you said he horsewhipped you!"

"Susan," said Mary, "you forget what you are saying."

"I don't, Mary. I have quite the conviction, clear on my mind, that Mr. Marvel said his master horsewhipped him."

"Bless your pratty face!" said James, much to Susan's delight—"no no, he never didn't touch a hair of my head!"

"You said he told you to fetch the whip, and—"

"I know—I know; and most times when my master mounted his horse he would say, 'Now, James, my whip—if—you—please,' so slow and solemn-like."

"'Orrid man!" said Susan, angrily—"why did not you tell him to fetch his whip himself, and so then run away?"

"Weel, miss, you see I had been brought up to mind and be obedient; and then I had not nowhere's to run to, so I always fetched the whip, and——"

"There now, that is what I say; every time, if you don't say it, you make me feel quite sure that that 'orrid Parson Hill *did* horsewhip you unmercifully."

"And it be pratty much as I feeled myself, miss," said James, laughing. "Every time it sim to me as I had had a gude licking—but I hadna. The master never touched me—never; and there is not a kinder master the whole country through, nor a betterer!"

"Why, I thought all the time you meant quite the contrary," said Susan, in a tone of disappointment. "I am sure I quite mean what I say—that I have never known so disagreeable, or ungentlemanly, or hardhearted a person."

"Perhaps, miss, when you know him betterer, you will maybe think betterer of him."

"No, I shall not," said Susan in a decided tone, as James Marvel turned away. "I shall always detest and despise him, as a man who takes every mean advantage. He is enormously fond of making other people work—it would be more becoming to him to work. He is very desirous other people should give reasons for everything—had he not better give his own reasons? I despise him!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

OF THE WIDOW MASON AND THE DOINGS AT THE "PACKHORSE."

ISAAC WATSON had not forgotten the taunt of the Widow Mason, viz., that he did not pay his score; and on the evening of this same Monday he determined to go and take his name out of her books. And after having made his mind easy on that subject, he thought he would call at the School Cottage and see Mary Cope once more; for though, as we have seen, Susan's voice had power to charm him each time he heard it, her want of science not only troubled him, by putting everything wrong, but left a feeling of uneasiness on his mind whenever he thought of the humiliation of the choir through her misdeeds. Neither Susan nor her charming voice had any share in

the attraction that drew Isaac to inquire after Mary Cope. And so Isaac went first to the "Pack-horse," but did not as usual seat himself or call for cider.

"Now, Mister Isaac, I'll bring your cup, eh?" said the Widow Mason.

"No, thank you," said Isaac, hesitating, and stroking his cap round and round; for though he had made up his mind, as he walked to the "Pack-horse," that he would not touch a drop of cider until after he had paid his score, on being actually there he found it more difficult to resist than he had anticipated.

His old companions were looking on. He felt awkward thus standing aloof, and half ashamed of what now appeared to him deserting those with whom he had formerly been so friendly.

"No cider, Mr. Isaac!" said the widow, tossing her head. "In course, then, I be obliged to you for your gude company—been't I, Mister Peter?"

"In course, Widdy—in course you be."

"But," said Isaac, hesitating, "I want to pay off my score."

"Oh—h!" said the widow; "that be a very dif-

ferenter tune—coz why? when people pays their scores, then the landlady stands treat. So just you toss off that there cup the whiles I reckon up."

We have said Isaac was good-natured and good-tempered. The widow's disagreeable manner had not made him angry, but her kindness in standing treat subdued him. He was naturally shy, and he felt painfully the awkwardness of his present position—all his old companions staring at him, and wondering why he kept aloof. Isaac, as he analyzed his feelings, felt that he marvelled at himself. He saw them whispering and elbowing each other. This combination of circumstances caused him to accept the widow's treat with more alacrity than he would otherwise have done. At length Peter Barker said aloud, in a jeering tone, and pointing his thumb over his shoulder to indicate Isaac:

"Don't you know? He can't never noo moore come and sit along of us, and smoke his pipe, and drink his cider—coz why?—eh!—don't you know?"

"Know!" said another, in a still louder tone, "to be sure I knows. He be a-going and a-sweet-hearting to that theere pratty young meeden as singed to the church."

"Ay, lad," said Peter; "*and* to Mistress Cope."

"What, both of them to one time?"

"Ay, lad. First the one, then the *t'other*," and the men who were listening to this dialogue chorused it with,

"Both of them to one time?—*both*?"

"Mistress Cope, did you say?" said the Widow Mason—"Mistress Cope! Here, Mister Isaac, here be your score a-added up—five shilling and nine pennies."

"Five shillings, widow?" said Isaac in amazement.

"Five shilling, Mister Isaac. Here, Ann, lass, fill up Mister Isaac's cup. In course you will have a gude treat; it never shall be said as Widdy Mason does not treat well. Now, Mister Isaac, take another pull."

"But, widow," stammered Isaac, "I think——"

"Why for, pray, is that young minx, Molly Cope, to be called mistress?" said the widow, interrupting Isaac; "can you tell I that?" continued she, as she snapped her fingers at the men who were drinking.

"Meedens is called mistress, I have heard tell," said one, "when they have schools."

"No," said the widow, sturdily, "meedens is not never called mistress."

"It be the passon as calls she mistress, I be a-thinking," said another.

"Ay!—it be the passon—and for why?" said Peter.

"And what does you think, Mister Isaac?" said the widow.

"Why, I must say I think five shillings a large sum, and——"

"An-an," said the widow, interrupting him, sneeringly, "and pray now, Mister Isaac, what would you please to be a-saying?" and then, before he could speak, she added, in a good-humoured tone, and with a hearty manner, "come, come, mop up your drink—I be a-standing treat—what! thee art not a-going to be a milk-sop 'cause thee hast gotten a score?"

"He would like to have a score of such treats!" laughed one of the men.

"And he *shall* have so much treat as he likes. Come, Mister Isaac," added the widow, coaxingly, "don't stand there in the doorway, there be somebody as wants to come in, and I be a-wanting to

sit down, my legs be tired of standing; and most times I do stand when a genelman be a-going to pay his score—ho! ho! ho!" laughed she, holding her fat sides; "coz why?—in politeness I must make my curtsy."

"Here, widow—here is the money," said Isaac, crossly; "six shillings—give me the change."

"And give you the change—here, Mister Isaac, one, two, three pennies," and the widow, after making her curtsy, seated herself heavily on a wooden chair, as Isaac slowly took up the pence.

"And, Mister Isaac, you did not tell us your 'pinion about Molly Cope, as I calls she," said the widow, tossing her head.

"Molly Cope," repeated Isaac, staring and jingling the pence in his hand.

"For-bye you call she Mistress Cope; but us have a-been saying," said the widow, thus craftily drawing in all who were present, though she alone had uttered the slur, "as meedens has not no right to be called mistress."

As this reading of Mary Cope's title was quite new to Isaac, he began to feel irritable; and

clever though he was, his intellect was more solid than brilliant, and in such a case as the present, required time to look round and see his position.

"Isaac, lad, come, come, I knows you be not too grand to sit you down and have a pipe," said an old man, a great crony of Isaac's; "don't you mind that saucy widdy—come, come and sit you down," and the old man made room for him on the same settle.

"Oh-h!" said the widow again, jeeringly, "you need not ax Mister Isaac—Jacob Smerdon, you need not ax he—coz why?—him be a-going a-sweet-hearting!"

This sally made the men laugh; but Jacob Smerdon continued to make signs to Isaac to come and sit by him; and Isaac, uncomfortable at standing thus aloof from his former friends, as well as disturbed by what the Widow Mason had said about Mary Cope, at length yielded.

"What was said about Mistress Cope?" said Isaac, in a low voice to Jacob.

"Don't thee mind what that saucy widdy says; her hitted Mistress Cope a slap; but her's always gotten a slap for somebody."

"And does you happen to know if Molly Cope's face be a-mended yet?" said the widow, who had not heard what Isaac and Jacob had said.

"It be that spoiled as be 'stonishing," said Peter.

"Massy me!" said the widow, laughing; "quite spoiled outright—I never didn't think it was so much of a face—I have knowed many betterer. Now, Mister Jacob, there be your grandchild, Phœbe, her have a-gotten rosy cheeks, and she's face is a long way afore Molly Cope's."

"'Pinionses differs, widdy," said Jacob; "Mistress Cope's be a more delicater face, and Mistress Cope's a-gotten a more delicater speech. Most times I thinks Mistress Cope be so white, and so still, and so smiling—just like to they grand ladies as be to the vickridge."

"Queer notions yours be, Jacob," said the widow; "Mistress Cope's skin be not no more delicater nor she's neighbours, only she be mighty stuck up—she holds up she's head as if she was somebody—she be not—she be nobody; leastways, she be only Molly Cope. Why for should Molly

Cope hold up she's head higher nor mine? I gets my living, she gets she's—I be just so 'spectable as she. And you be quite right, Jacob, after all, for 'pinionses does differ," and the widow went and looked at herself in the small cracked glass that hung up by the side of the clock, and tossed her head as she continued, "I have knowed the time when there was plenty 'pinionses as—as—" the widow hesitated, but one of the men, seeing her meaning, said,

"As admired your face widdy; and there be plenty of them 'pinionses leaved yet—aw! aw! aw!"

All this time Isaac sat drinking, quite unconscious that he was becoming gradually unfit for the visit he contemplated to Mary Cope; but he continued to sit on and on, and to drink pint after pint, until at length Jacob Smerdon arose to go.

"Come, lad," said he, to Isaac, "don't thee stop no longer; I be a-going to pay my score."

"Very well," said Isaac, rather glad to go, though he had been unwilling to make the first move, "and I will pay for what I have had."

But when the widow demanded "one shelling and four pennies," as due from him, Isaac again

found to his dismay that he had not so much with him.

"Never you mind, Mister Isaac, I'll score you up again," said the widow.

"But I cannot have had all that," said Isaac, remonstrating.

Cider was fourpence a quart, and he thought he could not have had so much.

"Maybe as you have a-gived it away," said she, sneeringly.

Isaac remembered that the score he had paid off was much larger than he had anticipated, and now he knew that he had not had so much as amounted to one shilling and fourpence. But he also knew his thoughts had been pre-occupied; and once again he felt he had put himself in the power of Widow Mason, and that for the present there was nothing left but to submit to have a score.

He left the "Packhorse" with Jacob Smerdon, none the better for the cider he had had, though not actually overcome by it; vexed with himself that he had not resisted more manfully, and troubled with the Widow Mason's disparaging mention of Mary Cope.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHAT JANE SANDS SAID TO MARY COPE.

WHEN the old man Jacob Smerdon turned off to his home, Isaac walked slowly on towards Mary Cope's cottage; and while pondering on the kind of reception she might vouchsafe to him, he heard quick steps following him, and turning round, saw Jane Sands, the wife of a labourer in the village.

"Mister Isaac!" said the woman. "And how be you?"

"And how are you, Jane?" said Isaac, shaking hands with the woman. "And where are you going at this time of night?"

"I be a-going to the school-mistress."

And Jane, who was somewhat of a virago,

clenched her fist and nodded her head, as if she meditated something terrible.

"To see Mistress Cope? Why, Jenny, woman, we can go together, for I am going there!"

"I'll gie't her!" said the woman, as she quickened her pace, and clenched her fist the tighter.

"Why, what can she have done?" said Isaac, in astonishment at the ill-feeling he again saw manifested towards one of whom he had always thought so well.

"Done! rabbit her! I'll let she know what she have a-done. She be a fine mistress to a school, Isaac, she be!"

And the woman strode hastily on, and, as she neared the cottage, left Isaac, ran forward, and knocked at the door with a loud and startling knock. Susan came to the door, and Isaac quickened his pace as he heard Jane Sands's loud voice, and saw her uncourteous manner.

"I wants the school-mistress—where be she?"

"How do you do, Mr. Isaac?" said Susan, in joyful tones.

But the woman pushed her aside and entered the cottage.

"I be come for the penny as my boy Joe gied you the morn," said she, addressing Mary.

"I don't understand you," said Mary, gently.

"I be a-going to make you understand," said the woman, clenching her fist and menacing Mary. "My boy Joe goed to your school the morn, to be larned his letters, and you never larned he nothing, for you set he a-top on a stool, when all the tothers in the school was a-sitting theyselves down quite comfortable. Be I to pay a penny for that? So you'll just gie I back the penny!"

"If you have anything to say of any child belonging to the school," said Mary, "you must have the goodness to go to the school-room tomorrow morning at nine o'clock and state your case."

"Aw-w-w! And you thinks as I be a-going to that there school, does you? And you would set I a-top of a stool, would you? Oh-h-h my!" said the woman, shaking her head, and holding up her fist at Mary. "But you be a very fine schoolmistress, you be! And I sha-a-an't go to your school, I sha-an't. Be I to go and be pointed at by you, and by the passon, and by all the leetle

lads in the village? Be I?—no, I been't; and you will just gie I the penny!"

And the woman went nearer to Mary, and looked more threatening.

"It is against the rules to——"

"Gie I the penny!" interrupted the woman.

"I tell you," said Mary, "it is not in my power to——"

"Gie I the penny!" again interrupted Jane Sands.

"Jane Sands," said Mary, stepping back as the woman approached nearer.

"Gie I the penny, or I'll make you repent—you white-faced——"

"You have no business here," said Mary.

"Gie I the penny!" reiterated the woman, bringing her heavy fist down on the little table, upon which stood supper for Mary and Susan, and making the crockery fly in all directions.

"Oh! good gracious, woman!" said Susan.

"Gie I the penny!" said Jane, now turning on Susan. "My boy sha-an't be set a-top on a stool and be pointed at, and laughed at! And be I to pay a penny for he to be so ill-used?—no, I been't. And gie I the penny!"

Though Isaac had not enough money in his pocket to pay the Widow Mason, he had some; and at this crisis he gallantly stepped forward, and laid a penny on the table, as he said,

"Here, Jenny, woman, take your penny."

But Mary Cope had seized it before Jane could touch it.

"Thank you, Isaac," said she in her quiet, mild tones. "I should return the penny to Jane Sands, if it were right; but it is not."

"I shall make you gie it to I, you spotted-faced hussy!" said Jane, again interrupting.

"Go out of this cottage, Jane, or I shall ask Isaac to turn you out."

"Isaac Watson a-turn I out at your bidding! He better not. Gie I the penny!"

"Come—come, Jenny," said Isaac, coaxingly.

"And I sha-nt 'come, come' till I has a-gotten the penny, as my boy Joe gived to that there school."

"Susan, shall you be afraid to fetch the constable?" said Mary.

"Oh, Mary, how can you ask me? I am sure I am terrified till I can scarcely stand." And

Susan sank into a chair, and covered her face with her hands.

"Shall I go, Mistress Cope?" said Isaac.

"Thank you. Do go, Isaac—I shall be much obliged."

"And *you* may fetch the constable," said Jane, jeeringly; "and *I* will have my penny." And she again thumped her fist upon the table.

"You will break every bit of the China," said Isaac, as he turned to leave the cottage.

While Susan exclaimed—

"Oh, gracious goodness!—how very frightful!"

And Mary said,

"And she will have it to pay for."

The woman's language now became much worse, and it need not be repeated here. Isaac, seeing her thus excited, did not like to leave Mary exposed to her fury, until she again said,

"Pray, Mr. Isaac, don't mind the woman's turbulent and ungovernable manner; leave us and fetch the constable."

Thus desired by Mary, he set off at a good pace, and the woman turned to heap fresh insults on Mary; but calculating shrewdly the time it would

take ere Isaac would bring help, she took care eventually to leave the cottage before the arrival of the constable.

When Isaac returned, and the little cottage was restored to some degree of order, he ventured to say,

"He had come to ask how Mary was; and he hoped she was getting bettter."

And he was then much gratified by Mary mingling with her thanks for his kind inquiries an acknowledgment that she was glad of his very opportune arrival; for though she did not in the presence of Jane Sands show any signs of fear, yet she could not deny that she expected every instant the excited woman would strike her.

"But, Mary, if to give the woman the penny would quiet her, and send her off, why did not you?" said Susan.

"Because the money belongs to the school, and I am answerable for it," said Mary.

"Well, but, Mary, a penny is such a little! I would much rather pay the penny than be frightened out of my wits in that way, and have my nice china broken, and myself made ill and all of a tremble."

"It is not right to give it back," said Mary. "I allow it would have been easy to have returned the penny, and so have saved myself much annoyance this evening; and here is yours, Mr. Isaac, and thank you much for wishing to help me," continued she as she blushed at her own deed; "but if I were to give way in one instance, I should only add to my trouble in the future."

"I cannot see, Mary, how to give back the penny to the woman, and so lose it yourself, could add to your future torment—such a little thing as that!" said Susan, laughing.

"It is the small things neglected that bring on the large ones to our destruction, miss," said Isaac, sententiously; but in the matter of visiting the "Packhorse," or counting his cups of cider, we rather fear he did not apply this wisdom to himself.

"If I suffer myself to be stormed out of a penny, because this woman chooses to interfere with the rules of the school, or from cowardice on my own part, another may come to-morrow and demand the very same!—and after her another!—and another! So that if I once were to give way, I should make a

precedent upon which all who came afterwards would found their claims, and each would be more difficult to withstand than the former. So it would not be one penny, but many pennies—it would not be one false step, but the many consequent on it; and these might bring on not only my own ruin, but in all probability the ruin of the school!"

Isaac all this time had looked on with wonder and amazement at this fair and delicate-looking little woman, shaken as she was by her fall from her usual health, who first battled it out so bravely, yet so gently and firmly, with the large, coarse, and angry woman, and then who so wisely reasoned upon her own course of action. He looked at her with a very visible admiration; but he was himself unconscious how strongly his feelings were expressed in his countenance.

CHAPTER XX.

WHICH TREATS OF THE EFFECTS OF STALE TOBACCO AND CIDER ON MISTRESS COPE.

"COME, Mr. Isaac, do have some supper," said Susan, who had been helping Mary to clear away the broken china and replace it with other.

"Thank you, miss, I must go," said Isaac, humbly.

"No, you must stay," persisted Susan; "indeed, Mr. Isaac must not go, must he, Mary? And, besides, after supper we can have such nice singing—eh, Mary?"

"Why, I feel so much obliged to you for so kindly coming to inquire for me," said Mary to Isaac, "and then for standing by me while Jane Sands was so rude, as well as for fetching the

constable, that I should be most ungrateful if I did not wish you to stay. But, Susan, we must not forget that Mr. Isaac is accustomed to much better things than I have to offer—" and her eyes fell upon the little table, where a loaf, butter, and two or three lettuces, with a jug of water, comprised the whole of the fare!

"Better things, Mistress Cope!" said Isaac, in a tone of reproach, "I come to see how you are; and I shall go away glad to find you are getting better. But I assure you, Mistress Cope, I am proud to sit down at your table, so don't mention 'better things.' And when I look round and see all the beautiful furniture in your cottage—your bright tables and pretty chairs, your carpet, your sofa, your pictures on the walls, and many other things, I am fairly amazed at your condescension in asking me to sit down with you!"

Mary blushed at Isaac's long speech, and Susan gazed round the room with a supercilious air. But we feel we ought to explain that Mary Cope was of a different class from the hardy denizens of the moor. She required warmer clothing, more fire in her cottage, more indulgences. Her

physique was too delicate to rough it, as most did there, and thus what appeared luxury to Isaac was in fact only necessary comfort to her.

And now Isaac, with his customary shyness and humility, seated himself on the edge of a chair, and kept as far from the table and the two young women as it was possible, consistently with eating his supper.

But when supper was over, and they began to sing he also began to feel more at his ease. He drew his chair close to the table, and telling Mary he knew his part by heart, placed the open book before her, sounded his pitch-pipe, gave the key-note, and they sang a trio for two soprani and bass.

Isaac was so intent on the singing, and so charmed with Susan's voice, that, unintentionally, he sang with great heartiness, staring at Susan all the time; and as Susan, as well as Isaac, did not require notes, for she did not understand them, this attention from Isaac was not only seen by her, but greatly valued. While poor Mary Cope had only sung a few bars, before she became conscious of a highly disagreeable odour of cider and stale tobacco; and the more they advanced in the glee,

and the more heartily Isaac sang, the more faint and ill she became, with this, to her, offensive scent.

Isaac, when the glee was over, quite unconscious that anything was the matter with Mary, continued his attention to Susan, who, absorbed in her own conquest over Isaac, and in his undoubted attentions to herself, was equally blind to Mary's illness.

"I never heard such a voice," said Isaac, earnestly. "Every time I hear it I like it better, and this music suits you so well; your upper notes are very clear, and the lower so round and full. I really never did hear so charming a voice!"

"I know; you never have heard one like it," said Susan, complacently. "I myself never heard one—no, not one, except, perhaps, Jenny Lind's; and there are those of my companions and admirers in London," minced she, affectedly, "who even doubt if Jenny's equals mine."

And then, looking round, she started as she said,

"My dear Mary, what is the matter?"

For Mary Cope, while Isaac and Susan were so

absorbed in each other, had slowly left her chair and gone to the cottage door, which, with some difficulty, she opened; and then seating herself within the current of fresh air, she gradually recovered.

"I think the room is rather close to-night," said she, looking very white.

"And you are not strong, dear," said Susan, kindly; while Isaac, the moment he saw Mary's pale face, was ashamed of his attentions to Susan. Not that he had the vanity to think Mary's pallid countenance expressed an inward pain on her part, caused by his notice of her cousin, but that he marvelled at himself for being drawn away for one instant from such purity and goodness, and even beauty, as Mary's.

"Perhaps you have tired yourself with singing, Mistress Cope?" said he, in a very gentle voice.

And in his good-nature and solicitude for her comfort he stooped his tall person down to her as he spoke. But as the nearer he approached the more offensive became the odour of stale tobacco and cider, so Mary only felt his presence a serious inconvenience.

"She is very delicate, Mr. Isaac," said Susan, hoping to draw his attention to herself.

"I think I am too tired to sing any more," said Mary, in the hope that Isaac would see the necessity of leaving them; but Susan prevented this by saying,

"Yes, dear, you don't look well. But Mr. Isaac and I can sing some duets, and that will amuse you."

"Oh! no, miss," said Isaac, "I am afraid I do not know any duet that will suit your voice and mine."

Soprano and bass, Isaac meant; but Susan, not understanding this, said,

"How very modest you are, Mr. Isaac! Why, there is 'Sweet sister Fay,' and 'What are the wild waves saying?' and 'The Fairies' Call,' and many others that are very enjoyable."

"They are all for two trebles," said Mary.

"Well, that is of no consequence," said Susan; "bass will do just as well, Mr. Isaac."

Isaac shook his head, and after a moment's pause he said,

"But if you know that very charming duet for

soprano and bass, 'Haste, my Nannette,' I shall be most delighted to sing with you."

It was now Susan's turn to shake her head in the negative, for that classical *morceau* was unknown to her. But speedily recovering from this disappointment,

"I will sing you a song," said she, unwilling to allow any opportunity for display to pass without attempting still to charm the strong man by her sweet voice. "It is a lovely thing from Bennett's 'May Queen:'—'With the Carol on the Tree.'"

And without more ado Susan began.

Mary Cope had anxiously hoped Isaac would, when he saw her so ill, go without more singing; but now, though she was in part relieved from the annoyance he had been to her by his attention becoming entirely absorbed in Susan's song, she found another cause for inquietude. Sitting apart she could the better look on. She could not be mistaken in Susan's eager desire to make a conquest of Isaac; and she felt also she could not be mistaken in reading, distinctly expressed on Isaac's features, his intense admiration of Susan.

The large, strong man sat still:—in one position,

like a statue:—immoveable:—scarcely daring to respire:—intently absorbed in Susan's song—a very charming one, and, we need hardly add, entirely unknown to Isaac.

When the last note died away, he did not move for a second or two, and then with a deep sigh he said,

"Is that all?"

"All! Why, yes, Mr. Isaac. Did you like it?" said Susan. "It is quite new—from the 'May Queen.'"

"I don't care what it is from. It is the most entrancing song I ever heard in my life! I never did hear anything like it!" said Isaac, enthusiastically. "Did you, Mistress Cope?"

"I have heard Susan sing it before to-night; and I have always liked it. But I am afraid I am rather tired, and——"

"Tired! Of course you are, Mistress Cope, and I ought not to be stopping here in this way; but we don't hear such music every day, or so fine a voice." And Isaac turned and looked at Susan. "But I cannot go away without saying I am very anxious you should get better, Mistress Cope. I

cannot forgive myself for the share I had in——"

"Say no more—pray say no more on that subject," said Mary, rising, and offering her hand to Isaac. "I have no doubt I shall soon be better. Good night, and many thanks for all your kindness."

"I assure you, Mistress Cope," said Isaac, deferentially, as he retained Mary's small hand in his own, with a hearty grasp, "there is nothing I would not do for you!"

"Good night, Mr. Isaac. When shall you come again?" said Susan, impatient to recall his attention to herself.

"Good night, miss,'" said Isaac, as he hastily left the cottage without replying to her query.

"People on Dartmoor cannot help being vulgar!" said Susan, tossing her head, as she heard him walk away. "He might have given a civil answer to a civil question!"

CHAPTER XXI.

PARSON HILL'S COMMENT ON THE BEHAVIOUR OF JANE SANDS.

AT the school-room the next morning, Mary Cope gave an account to Parson Hill of the visit she had had from Jane Sands. He heard her patiently to the end, then standing up, he called the attention of the school; and at his bidding employment was laid aside for the time being.

"Does any one here remember the introduction of the new boy, Joe Sands, to our school yesterday?"

Chorus of many voices—

"Yes, sir."

"One stand forth—you, Tom Brown."

And the boy came forward immediately.

"Do you know if Mistress Cope compelled the

new boy, Joe Sands, to come to our school? Did she fetch him, or did he come of his own accord?"

"Please, sir, the mistress didna fetch him. He comed by hisself."

"He came himself? Then how did he find the way?"

"Please, sir, he comed with his brother Bill and his sister Bess. They shewed he the way."

"Brother Bill and Sister Bess to Joe Sands, stand forth," said Parson Hill. And when they obeyed his order he asked—"Did you show the new boy, Joe Sands, the way to this school?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why did you so?"

"Please, sir, coz mother telled us to bring him; and gived us the penny to gie to Mistress Cope."

"Your mother, Jane Sands, sent him here? Does she know that there are rules at this school that cannot be infringed upon?"

"Don't know, sir."

"Do you, Bill and Bess, know these rules?"

"Please, sir, us knows; and us telled mother as——"

"Stop," said Parson Hill authoritatively.

"Answer my question—Do you know the rules of the school?"

"Please, sir, us does know."

"Did the new boy seat himself on his entrance into the school?"

"No, sir; he wasn't 'bedient."

"He was disobedient?" said the parson; "tell me what he did."

"He runned up and down the school, and laughed and made a noise; and us couldna learn us lessons."

"What happened then?"

"The mistress telled him he must sit down; but he wouldna."

"What happened then?"

"The mistress telled him she would put he a-top of that there stool."

"Then he was forewarned that punishment would follow his disobedience?"

"Yes, sir."

"And because he persisted in disobeying, he was placed by Mistress Cope on a stool in the middle of the room?"

"Yes, sir."

"Mistress Cope was quite right; all who come here shall obey the mistress, and none shall break the rules without suffering the punishment due to his or her fault," said Parson Hill. Then speaking in a more gentle tone to the two children, he continued, "Bill and Bess Sands, it has pleased your mother, Jane Sands, to go to Mistress Cope's cottage, and make a furious attack upon her, demanding back again the penny you paid when you brought the new boy; now mind what I say," and the parson held up his finger to attract the notice of the school, "moneys paid into this school are never returned—your mother cannot have her money back." And then, gazing round the school, he continued in a louder tone, "And pray, may I ask, why is the new boy, Joe Sands, not here?"

"Please, sir, mother said as Joe shouldna come to be put a-top of a stool, and pointed at."

"Who wants to set him on a stool?" said Parson Hill; "not I—not Mistress Cope. The young ne'er-do-weel himself wished to stand there; inasmuch as that he did the very thing that caused him to be raised to that honour—therefore he wished to stand there, did he not?"

"No, sir, he didna."

"I say he did," said Parson Hill, authoritatively. "Mistress Cope told him he must stand if he continued disobedient, did she not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then why did he continue disobedient, if he had no desire to stand on the stool?"

"Please, sir, Joe thought as Mistress Cope wouldna stick he a-top on a stool."

"Boy!" said Parson Hill, in a tone of great astonishment, "she told him she would."

"Yes, sir; but Joe thought she wouldna do it."

"Not do as she said she would!" said the parson, starting back with an angry look; "*not* do as she said!—then why should she say it? Boy, does the new boy, Joe Sands, think Mistress Cope tells falsehoods?"

"Don't know, sir."

"Does the new boy know what is meant by a falsehood?—Do you, Bill Sands?—Do you, Bess?"

"Yes, sir."

"Can you tell me why the new boy accused Mistress Cope of telling falsehoods?"

"Please, sir, coz why—mother says to Joe as

her'll wollop he; and, please, sir, her never doesn't."

"Hump!—Jane Sands says she will, and she does not; well, what has that to do with Mistress Cope?"

"Please, sir, Joe thought as Mistress Cope was like to mother, and when her said as her would stick he a-top on a stool, as her never would."

"Then the new boy, Joe Sands, pays Mistress Cope a great compliment," said Parson Hill, bowing to Mary; "and she must feel much inward gratification at being compared with so tall, and strong, and rapid-tongued a woman as Jane Sands; but I humbly beg to differ with the new boy—I see no similitude between the two—do you, Bill and Bess?"

"No, sir."

"And your mother wanted him at home this morning? Is he coming to-morrow?"

"No, sir—never no more."

"Oh-h!—oh-h!—I now begin to understand the meaning of all this. And we are never again to have the happiness of seeing the new boy, Joe Sands, in our school again, and that because *he*

behaved ill, and received the punishment due to his disobedience," and after a pause, Parson Hill added, speaking slowly and impressively, "Then, Bill Sands and Bess Sands, it becomes my painful duty to send you two away from this school. If Joe Sands, whose name is entered in our book, is to stay away because his mother pleases, you, Bill and Bess, must remain away because I please. Go, therefore, to your mother, and tell her we have no desire for the company of her cherub child, Joe, the disobedient; but we are sorry that her behaviour compels us to send you away—in other words, dismiss you from the school."

"Please, sir—uh! uh! uh!—please, sir, us doesna want to go!" said they crying bitterly.

"Very likely not," said the parson; "but the innocent often suffer for the guilty, and you are in that dilemma at this time." And then turning to Mary Cope, he added—"Of the woman, Jane Sands, so careful of her cherubian Joe, we must make an example to all other mothers. Mothers must be taught that when their children are sent here, they are under my control, until they are

finally removed from the school; and that without my permission a mother has no power to take her child away; neither can she interfere with our rules, rewards or punishments, or have her money returned. If mothers choose to threaten to 'wollop' their cherubs, and then let their kind hearts interfere with their stern duties, that is nothing to us. If we threaten, upon sufficient cause, we put the threat in execution." And then again turning to the weeping children, he added—"And so, Bill and Bess Sands, if your mother chooses to take home the new boy, Joe Sands, whose name is on our books, to please her own fancy, she will also take back you two, to please me. Go, Bills Sands! —Go, Bess Sands!"

And weeping and humiliated, the children left the school.

CHAPTER XXII.

OF PARSON HILL'S NEW CURATE, AND OF PARSON HILL'S OLD CLOTHES.

"AND have you heard the news, widdy?"

The Widow Simpson looked up from her knitting, and saw Jacob Smerdon and his wife, Nanny, standing in the shed.

"Jacob and Nanny! I be very glad you be come. Isaac, lad, bring the chairs," said the widow.

But Isaac had already gone into the cottage, and now returned with two chairs, which he placed comfortably in the front of his shed. The three old people seated themselves, and Isaac returned to his work.

"And have you heard the news, widdy?" said old Jacob, as he rested both hands on the top of his stick and gazed at the widow.

"No, Jacob, nobody has never telled I no news."

"The passon be going to have a coorit, widdy!" said Nanny Smerdon, eagerly.

"A coorit, Nanny! And what be a coorit?"

"A coorit be a kind of 'prentice to the passon," said Jacob. "He learns to do passon's work."

"'Prentice to the passon! Massy me! It be very queer times when passons have 'prentices," said the Widow Simpson.

"The coorit comed to the Vickridge may be a month agone, widdy," said Nanny Smerdon, "and he gived us that there fine sermon in the church."

"He be called Mister Gray," said Jacob.

"And he goed back again, and didna 'prentice hissel, then. But it be all right now, forbye Mister Gray be the passon's new coorit," said Nanny.

"But if the coorit preaches the sermons for the passon, Nanny, then what be the passon to do?" said the Widow Simpson, laying down her knitting as she became more interested in the news.

"The passon be a-going to rest hisself, and he have got this young one to do his work. And, widdy," said Nanny, "I mind as that there coorit,

Mister Gray, gived us a fine sermon about a month agone."

"Fine sermon!" said Jacob. "Yes, the new coorit doth preach mighty fine sermons. It be a peety as he be such a leetle one."

"A little one!" chimed in Isaac. "Why, what has big or little to do with preaching fine sermons?"

"Nothing, Isaac, lad, nothing at all," said Nanny, in a tone of decision. "A coorit may preach just so well if he be a leetle one or if he be a big one."

"The passon be a big man," said Jacob, striking his stick on the floor of the shed, "and I be a-thinking us would miss he."

"Miss the passon, Jacob!" said the widow, "in course us would; but then us mustna go again Mister Gray 'cause he be a leetle one. Gude stuff be in a leetle space most-times."

"I knows it, widdy," said Jacob; "and I be not again' the coorit. But I be a-thinking as I shall not be so well off for breeches."

"Maybe the passon have been a gude friend to thee, Jacob," said the widow.

"Maybe he have, widdy," said Jacob, with a

shrewd nod of the head. "And may be many folk will like the coorit's sermons, but I be a-going to stick to the passon." And again he struck his stick against the floor.

"The coorit speaks up fine!" said Nanny, in great admiration; "and he says such long words and such a many of them!"

"You are quite right, Nanny," said Isaac. "Mr. Gray gave us a learned discourse."

"Ay, it be true," said Jacob, shaking his head; "and it be a peety as he be such a leetle one."

"His sermons be not leetle ones," said Nanny. And then she added, as it seemed in a tone of defiance to Jacob, and tossing her head, "Gie I the coorit for a sermon!"

"And gie I the passon for a pair of breeches," said Jacob, slapping his thigh with great vigour.

"You be most so big as the passon be, Jacob," said the widow.

"I be, widdy," said Jacob, stretching his legs out, "and the passon's breeches be very gude ones."

"And the coorit's sermons be very gude ones," said Nanny.

"The parson is a good friend to the parish, Nanny," said Isaac, "and the parson always preaches excellent sermons; I don't see how any curate can ever do better than the parson has done; and he has always had a free hand, a kind heart, and a gentle word."

Isaac spoke feelingly, for he felt that the vicar had been very merciful to him in his transgressions.

"And there will be some as will live to miss him," said the widow, "though maybe I shall not."

"Ay, widdy, ay; but don't you see," said Jacob, knocking his stick on the floor to attract attention, "now as the passon have a-got this new coorit, him might go clean off hisself somewheres! And then what be I to do for breeches? Can you tell I that?" said he in a loud voice.

"Jacob, I be a-thinking as I must look up the old ones, and mend them up a bit betterer, and then these here will last the longer!" said Nanny.

"The passon has got a many pair of breeches," said the widow. "I have a-seed him with white ones, and gray ones, and black ones, and brown ones; he have a many pair, surely!"

"Ay, widdy, you be right," said Jacob; "and

the passon, God bless him, gives his breeches to many folk. There be that Peter Barker, I have knowed he have the passon's breeches, and then I have knowed he to misbehave hisself!"

"Yes, Jacob, and I have known Peter Barker tell the parson he could not go to church because he had not clothes fit to go in. And then the kind parson has sent him what he required," said Isaac.

"And after that, lad," said the widow, "Peter did not go to church."

"He went twice," said Isaac.

"Did Peter Barker go to church two times, lad?" said Nanny. "I have never seed he there."

"Yes, he went twice, and then several Sundays passed and he was not seen at church again. Then the parson asked why he did not go, because now he had clothes, so that could not longer be an excuse."

Isaac paused for a second or two and then proceeded.

"And then Peter said, 'If your honour thinks as I have not been to church often enough for the clothes you sent me, I don't care if I do go once more!'"

"Shame on him!" said Jacob, tapping his stick on the floor. "I say as Peter might ha' been proud to walk up the church in the passon's clothes. I be."

"Him always was a bad one, Isaac, lad," said Nanny.

"It be said as Peter goes a methodying," said Jacob.

"They methody churches be new things—be not they, Jacob?" said the widow.

"For-bye that I have not never seen them in my young days," said Jacob; "I be a-thinking as you be right, widdy."

"What be they like to? Can you tell, Isaac, lad?" said Nanny Smerdon.

"Methodist chapels have a strange appearance on the outside," said Isaac; "something like a large square cottage, with big windows."

Dissent was unknown on Dartmoor, and the chapels that were erected in the towns near were small.

"I have no curiosity about them," said Isaac. "I never was inside any one of them."

"And how be your leetle grandchild, Phœbe?"

said the widow. "Isaac says her has gotten very gude looks."

"Her be a very pratty meeden," said Nanny. "I be a-thinking as her will come to be like to Mistress Cope, delicater and more trim than moor meedens be!"

"And do she like she's place?" said the widow.

"Ay, widdy, there be two young mistresses as she 'tends to, and they be pleased with she," said Nanny.

"Jacob!" said Isaac, coming forward, and speaking in a low voice, "what did the widow Mason mean about Mistress Cope?"

"Isaac, lad, don't thee take no 'count of that there widdy; her be too sharp with her tongue, and her be too sharp with her score! And—and if there was but another 'Packhorse' in the village of Lawsleigh, I would never let she see I inside her door again!—I would not!" said Jacob, striking his stick loudly.

"But what did she mean—can you tell?" said Isaac.

"Her meaned to pull she down: coz why, old widdies like Widdy Mason—her be a bad widdy—

be always jealous of the young meedens as be pratty, and got rosy cheeks—and—and it be a-said, lad, down in the village, as you be a sweet-hearting with Mistress Cope, and so the Widdy Mason wanted to run she down while you was there."

"She has no business to call her 'Molly Cope,'" said Isaac, angrily.

"She be a very bad widdy, us all knows that, and what be the use to say any more? Us cannot take hold of she—her be a slippery widdy—and her be jealous—widdies be most times, when they be bad and the young meedens pratty."

"I wish there was another 'Packhorse' in the village," said Isaac—"What! are you going, Nanny?"

"Us be a-going to the mill, lad."

"Be you, Nanny?" said the widow; "then may be you will come in as you pass by this afternoon, and have a dish of tea?"

"And thank you kindly, widdy—us will. Eh, Jacob?"

"Ay, woman, ay, and thank you, widdy."

And the two old people set off to the mill.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHICH INTRODUCES THE NEW CURATE TO THE READER.

MR. GRAY was an eager and hopeful aspirant after all things good. He had only just taken his degree at Oxford; he was therefore young, and to a certain extent inexperienced. He was a man of studious habits, but of practical knowledge he had none. He had been brought up by an uncle—a hard man—who was in a high position, and possessing much of this world's wealth.

This hardness of temperament was excruciating to Mr. Gray, whose heart was kind and generous. Before he went to college, his uncle had given him a tutor as harsh by nature as himself, who had kept his pupil in great restraint, and who did

not attempt to find the way to his heart. When Mr. Gray at last left home, and found himself able to do as he pleased, he joined a set of young men, whose marked eagerness for most things in extremes gave a sort of charm to his hitherto cramped and pent-up desires.

Mr. Gray had read of the miseries of the poor and the oppressions of the rich; the latter he thought he knew from experience, because his uncle was too crabbed by temperament to be charitable, and too careless and selfish to devote his time or give his money to the poor. These things combined made him unconsciously to himself a severe judge of all wealthy people, but more especially of the clergy, who possessed, as he thought, good livings. He did not himself desire to benefit by the riches of the Church, but he earnestly wished to distribute some part of her wealth amongst the poor and suffering.

He had accepted Mr. Hill's curacy because of the far-off—and, as it seemed to him—dreary locality, in which he would have a large sphere for usefulness. He was not either attracted by or astonished at the magnificent grandeur of the Tors

rising here and there around, for he had not a poetical mind; neither was he daunted by bad roads, precipitous hills, or miry bogs, for he was not of a cowardly nature. But he brought his peculiarly nurtured ideas with him, and when he saw the small cluster of cottages that comprised the "village of Lawsleigh" seated in desolation in the heart of the moor, he felt convinced that the inmates of each home must be ill fed and ill clothed. Because he thought that the poor ought to have the same food, wear the same clothes, and have their dwelling places as comfortable as the rich! He forgot, in his great zeal for their well-being, that one precept of holy writ, that there shall always be "rich and poor—master and servant." How then can all things be equal? And he could not, on his first arrival on the moor, be made to comprehend that the cottages he thought so wretched were in reality homes of much comfort to the hardy dwellers on the moor, with their turf fires in great plenty, and, if coarse, substantial fare, and such as they had always been accustomed to. If their clothing appeared rough and scanty to one from a distant county, it was more

in appearance than reality, for they had all they required.

Mr. Gray, it will be observed, was educated in the manners and customs of the Church, as observed in the present day. He was ignorant of her ancient forms and ceremonies, even as they were in use all over England up to the end of the reign of Charles II.; and when he met with some few still lingering on Dartmoor, he displayed more zeal than prudence. Nevertheless, Mr. Gray was a hard-working, pains-taking, humble-minded, zealous clergyman; perhaps a little too zealous over trifles, whose very nature would in time correct themselves.

As we have said, he wanted experience. Mr. Gray had been but little more than a week at the village of Lawsleigh, but he had strolled day by day to the more distant parts of the parish, and, to use his own expression, had "looked up" the people here and there; and now he was going to the vicarage, for the third time, to dine with Parson Hill. On his way thither, he used many arguments, the better to convince himself he was acting rightly, when he determined not to let even

the vicar himself continue longer in such total ignorance of many things conformable to the ways of the Church, or the customs of her priesthood, without a word or two of advice or sturdy remonstrance.

And now Mr. Gray is seated at the vicar's table. During dinner he introduced his intended expostulation by first staring rudely at Parson Hill's coat, and then saying,

"I have not seen a blue coat and gilt buttons for so long a time, yours quite attracts my attention. We clergy always wear black."

"I am glad that I wear my blue coat and glittering buttons, inasmuch as they must recall to you many happy days of your youth," said Parson Hill.

"Indeed, I don't remember that I ever wore a blue coat," said Mr. Gray; "I should rather say such a colour has not been used in my day—not even in my boyhood."

Mr. Gray thought, by pushing the blue coat into the days of the past, he should the better prove it had no business to be used in the present day; but Parson Hill stared at Mr. Gray for a

second or two without speaking, and then said, courteously,

"Probably I misunderstood, for I thought you said, 'I have not seen a blue coat or gilt buttons for so long a time,' from which I should naturally infer that, at some period of your life, you had seen one, though I daresay they are rare now."

This quiet nonchalance from Parson Hill irritated Mr. Gray; he discovered, too, that, in his eagerness to introduce the subject, he had inadvertently committed himself to the fact of having seen a blue coat at some time or other—he could not remember that he ever had seen gentlemen wear blue coats and gilt buttons; but this only vexed him the more, and he said in an irritable tone,

"You must allow me to say, I never saw a clergyman, and especially the vicar of a parish, wearing anything but black."

"Did you not, indeed?" said Parson Hill, in a tone of surprise; "I have often. I seldom have a new coat; and as this happens to be blue, and to fit me comfortably, and I like it, indeed much better than either of my black coats—for I have

black," added he, bowing to Mr. Gray; "why, it goes on and on from one year to another—dress coats last so long, if you happen to have more than one, as I have."

"I don't see why blue should last longer than black," said Mr. Gray, testily.

"Nor do I," said Parson Hill, sipping his wine.

"But, may I ask, why do you wear blue, since you say you have black, and black is so much more becoming to the clergy?" said Mr. Gray.

"Yes, you may ask," said Parson Hill, slowly, and staring at Mr. Gray.

"And perhaps you will give me a reply?" persevered Mr. Gray.

"Certainly," said Parson Hill, bowing; and then drawing himself up and speaking in most suave tones, he said, "I wear blue because I happen to have blue; and I do not study the becoming, as I may infer, from the information you have just given me, that the clergy do. When a man gets to my time of life, he rarely studies the becoming."

"I do not mean personally becoming, I mean becoming to your cloth," said Mr. Gray.

"I think, as a rule, blue is a more becoming colour than black," said Parson Hill; "though, as I have said, I *do not* study the becoming." And then, turning round, and speaking to his attendant, he said, "Wine, George," and addressing Mr. Gray, he added, "Will you have sherry or Madeira?"

"Thank you—no wine, I never drink wine," said Mr. Gray.

"Ah! I beg your pardon," said the parson, courteously. "You have told me that before. George, never take the wine to Mr. Gray; bring it to me. Madeira!"

And Parson Hill, before sipping his wine, bowed in the old-fashioned way to Mr. Gray.

"You will excuse my resuming the subject of dress?" said Mr. Gray.

"I will excuse you," said Parson Hill, complacently eating his cutlet.

"You should not wear top-boots and knee-breeches. Such things are never seen now-a-days."

"I beg to differ with you; top-boots and white corduroys are seen every day on this moor. Would

you have me ride to the meet without them? You might as well ask me not to ride in pink! Why, sir, if you happen to stick in a bog, your beautifully bright pink gleams out in the midst of the slush; and if you required help, your friends would see you, and come and give you a helping hand! And don't you think the corduroys keep out the wet? Ah! you have never tried them!"

And Parson Hill, having finished his cutlet, put down his knife and fork, leaned back in his chair, and met Mr. Gray's ruffled look with one of kind inquiry.

"No," said Mr. Gray, sternly, "I never have tried such garments, and I trust I never shall."

"Have you ever seen an up-country horse flounder in a bog?" said Parson Hill, eagerly, and leaning forward.

Mr. Gray did not reply.

"A moor-horse will struggle through a bog, or, if down, flop out of it, but your up-country thorough-bred has not been bred to it, and can neither understand nor get through a morass. I hope you have moor-horses, Mr. Gray."

"I have no horse," said he, in rather an irritable

tone. "But you, sir, allow me to observe," continued he, "you, sir, as a dignitary of the Church, do you ride across country in pink? And——"

"As a dignitary of the Church!" said Parson Hill, drawing himself up proudly.

"But, sir, I assure you," said Mr. Gray, eagerly, "the dignitaries of the Church do not ride!"

"And I assure you, you are mistaken," said Parson Hill, blandly. "And not only do they ride, but they are welcomed. And why not, pray? And not only are they welcomed, but, sir, they would be missed. I rather mean, if they were to absent themselves from the meet, &c., &c., their absence would be regretted!"

Mr. Gray shook his head deprecatingly, and Parson Hill continued.

"Did you ever read 'Collyn's Chase of the Red Deer?'"

"No, I have not time for such reading."

"Now, there; you will excuse me if I quote a passage that dwells on my memory. The writer says, 'Without wishing to see the dignitaries of the Church again maintaining their kennels of hounds, I should feel regret if I were to miss from

the field the familiar faces of some of those members of the clergy who now join in the sport in our country, and whose presence is always welcomed at the covert-side.' I have no kennels of hounds—I never had—but I ride, of course I ride! And I don't see what else one has to do at particular seasons of the year, on this moor, away from the world and society in general. I don't see that one can do anything but ride!"

And now Parson Hill leaned back in his chair, and looked at Mr. Gray with a smile of inquiry.

"I suppose you could attend to your parish?" said Mr. Gray.

The smile faded from Parson Hill's face, and for a few seconds he continued to gaze fixedly on Mr. Gray, who, to do him justice, met the parson's eye unflinchingly. At length the smile returned to the vicar's expressive countenance, and he said,

"When I dined with Archdeacon L., at Oakhampton, I met a young clergyman who had had a good deal of pernicious reading, 'Essays and Reviews' for instance; though I must admit in my time I have read some hundreds of sterling 'Essays'—Pope's 'Essay on Man' occurrs to me

at the present moment as an example—and some thousands of excellent 'Reviews,'—the review of 'Collyn's Chase of the Red Deer' in the *Athenæum* was admirable—I have read such 'Essays and Reviews' without ever finding any harm, and I could not but think of the old proverb, 'What is one man's meat is another's poison!' *I* do not meet with—poison. Even bygone things called 'Oxford Tracts'——"

"Oxford tracts, pernicious things!" interrupted Mr. Gray.

"Pardon me," said Parson Hill, "I have never read them. But as the gentleman of whom I spoke backed up much that he had to say with Tract 000, and as much that he said was not worth the saying, I took upon myself to blame the 'Tracts' from which it appeared to me he had gleaned his worthless remarks."

"They were the finest things of their day," said Mr. Gray.

"Were they indeed!" said the vicar, in a tone of surprise. "If they at all resembled the sort of 'Tract' I have seen in my people's cottages within the last week, I can only say they are great trash!"

"Pray, did you notice the titles of the tracts you so easily condemn?" said Mr. Gray, colouring deeply.

"'Happy Jack,' 'The Good Old Woman,' 'The Two Boys who went Different Ways,'" said Parson Hill.

"No, these are not at all like the 'Oxford Tracts.' I gave them to the poor ignorant people," said Mr. Gray.

"If the 'Oxford Tracts' were the finest things of their day, I should think they must be superior to 'Happy Jack,'" said Parson Hill, courteously.

"Give the 'Oxford Tracts' to such benighted heathens as are to be found on this moor? It is clear you don't understand them. I will explain."

"Excuse me, sir," said Parson Hill, bowing low, "they may be as fine as you say they are, but I do not desire to know more of them than I do at this moment."

"How strange!" said Mr. Gray.

"Strange!" said Parson Hill, smiling. "And yet I must assure you, strange though it may seem, I do *not* wish to read the 'Oxford Tracts;' but then I do not wish to give up my top-boots,

my corduroys, my pink coat, or even my blue one; they are all satisfactorily suitable for the purposes to which they are applied."

"Consider your cloth, sir," said Mr. Gray, angrily.

"No, no; I shall not spare it, after all these years of wear," said the parson.

"*Your* cloth, sir; your cloth," reiterated Mr. Gray.

"It is my cloth," said Parson Hill, mildly.

"But, sir, the clergy are called 'the cloth,'" said Mr. Gray, in his desire to explain, only mystifying the more.

"In the 'Oxford Tracts?'" said the incorrigible parson. "Now, Mr. Gray, since you don't drink wine, perhaps you eat fruit?"

"In London—indeed I may say in all places—the clergy always dress in black," said Mr. Gray.

"There is no class of men who ought to cultivate coolness of temper more than the clergy," said Parson Hill. "Black is very heating, it attracts the sun. How glad the London clergy must be of a trip to the country! and you, Mr. Gray," continued Parson Hill, blandly, "you, fresh

from Town, pray wear your blue coat, or your pink if you prefer it. Fortunately, we are free as air on Dartmoor, and may wear any colour we please. For my part, I always wear my comfortable blue at dinner; and when I have had my wine, I go to my snuggery, take off my blue, pop it into its hiding-place, put on my loose wrap, and have my agreeable pipe!—that is the way to enjoy your pipe; and then George serves me with coffee there; that is, when I am alone—and I hope to make you, Mr. Gray, quite at home with me," said Parson Hill, bowing; "and if you don't drink wine, which I confess is an extraordinary thing, perhaps you can enjoy a pipe or a cigar? I have both. I wish to meet your taste, and make you—"

"No, sir, thank you—the clergy don't smoke!"

"Oh—h—the 'Oxford Tract' clergy—they must be rather a—a—marvellous class of men," said Parson Hill, musingly, "for it seems to me that they don't smoke, they don't drink wine, nor wear blue or pink coats, nor ride to cover—perhaps they can't ride at all—nor wear top-boots, nor corduroys. Well, well, they miss many pleasures; but let us not grudge them their own way;

let them have their day while it lasts! and we, Mr. Gray, will have our day in our way! And now, since I see you don't even care for fruit, suppose we go to the drawing-room—but—" and he hesitated—"I am sorry there are no ladies to receive us. Perhaps now the 'Oxford Tract' clergy would think me a very barbarous host, if they were by any chance to visit me? Or—must I add to their long catalogue of dislikes, that they don't like ladies? Come, come—I see I weary you—perhaps you like music—I have a capital Broadwood, you shall try it."

"I don't play," said Mr. Gray.

"I do," said the parson, as he opened the instrument and seated himself.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHICH INTRODUCES THE FUTURE "QUEEN OF DARTMOOR."

AND now we must transfer our readers from Dartmoor and its solitudes, and small population, to London, the busy mart of the world; and in one of the large squares, though not one of the most fashionable, we will follow the postman with his loud *rat-tat*, until he stops to deliver a letter from Parson Hill; and over the shoulders of the lady to whom the letter is written we will look at the parson's clear caligraphy, and read for ourselves:

"DEAR MRS. HARCOURT,

"I do not intend this as a proper answer to your last, kind, *long* letter; but I heard

promiscuously you had been at Tihidy in your way to Penzance; and I can hardly understand what that means, as I thought your stay at Tremissic was to be a long one. You will see above 'long'; well, so it was, but I rejoiced thereat; and pray do not think for one moment that such an epistle does not give me much pleasure. I tell you it does; and I acknowledge I am very selfish to send you such short replies—pray do not grumble at my shortcomings.

"But this is not what I intended to write about. I have been thinking that, as I have promised myself the pleasure of visiting Cornwall early in August, I should meet you in my rambles, and that then I would say, 'that I hoped you would not leave Tremissic for the East—if that be your destination, though I don't mean Bagdad—without coming to pay the old vicarage—I now call it hermitage—a visit.' That was what I meant to say to you in Cornwall; but as you appear to me 'shifty,' as we say of the wind on Dartmoor, I think it safer to tell you now, since I fear I have lost the chance of seeing you.

"By the way, you are fond of 'something new.'

I have freshly imported a curate, whom I hope to present to you. He is clever, zealous, well-read, gentlemanly, and marvellously well-dressed. Black, from head to foot! *You* will be charmed; and *I* am thinking of astonishing, and probably alarming, our next 'meet' by imitating my curate, fresh from the world of parsons who only wear black, and personating for the time being the character of the worthy 'gentleman in black.' And if you will only come in time, you may canter by my side on the pretty grey mare, and take upon yourself, also for the time being, the spotless character of 'the woman in white.' And then I can answer for it 'the mbor' and 'our meet' will have seen something extraordinary, and have something unusual to say, though the remainder of the huge world lies slumbering in ignorance of our dress, our words, or our deeds.

"Of Mr. Gray, my excellent curate, I may say he has the 'Oxford Tracts' at his fingers' ends, and the 'Essays and Reviews' in his head.

"And now of Charlie, and his sweet wife, I can tell you but little. They have taken up their abode at 'Paul Tavey,' about ten miles from hence.

But forest trees, shrubs, plants, and exotics *don't* come to their full height, blossom, and show their richly coloured flowers so quickly as madame could wish. You don't know her yet. All the better for both. Your happiness in each other lies in the future. You will dovetail *à merveille!*

"Now pray, my dear Mrs. Harcourt, if you are not better engaged, fix your own time, and let me know when I may have the pleasure of meeting you at the station at N—— within a week or two?

"But now, I have more wonders to speak of. For, fancy me, from my hermitage in the heart of the classical Dartmoor, with the heavenly ambitious Tors rising round my domain—fancy me within a drive of a station—a railway station! I give it up! I see, in my mind's eye, the curling smoke from the nostrils of the iron horse; I hear the clatter of the multitude in his train! The world is coming to dislodge me from my wilderness—me! almost the last of the old moorland parsons! Make haste, dear Mrs. Harcourt, and come and take a last look at the hermitage, and at

"Yours as ever sincerely,

"WILLIAM HILL."

Mrs. Harcourt sat thoughtfully looking out of the open window into the square below, with the letter in her hand, when her reverie was broken in upon by the hasty entrance of a lady, who said, as she went up to her,

"I saw the postmark, dear Mary! You have another letter from Mr Hill?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Harcourt, musingly.

"Yes—is that all?" said Mrs. Curzon, in a tone of disappointment.

Mrs. Harcourt started perceptibly as she offered the letter to Mrs. Curzon, and said,

"You may read it, dear Sophia—there is nothing in it."

"Then do you mean if there was something in it, something desirable, and very much to be hoped for—do you mean that then you would not let me see it?" said Mrs. Curzon, as she took the letter.

"Oh, no! Indeed I do not mean that, dear Sophia. I only mean your suspicions with regard to Mr. Hill and myself have no foundation."

Mrs. Curzon was by this time too much absorbed in the letter to reply. When she came to the end she arose with *empressement*, and throwing her arms round her sister said,

"You always say there is nothing. Call you this nothing—this charming letter? True, he does not actually ask you to have him, but he is always writing, and keeping watch and ward over you, and always asking you to go to him."

Mrs. Harcourt made no remark, and Mrs. Curzen continued:

"Does he not write very often?"

"No," said Mrs. Harcourt.

"Nonsense! He wrote to you only last week?"

"No. Six weeks, perhaps two months ago."

"I am sure you are wrong, Mary. And he asks you to forgive him, that is, he tells you not to grumble, which is a proof he thinks you have cause to grumble. And he says how much he likes your letters; and I am sure I don't marvel at that, for you have indeed the pen of a ready writer. And then he asks you to fix your own time to go and see him! Oh! oh!" continued she, "you seek to throw dust in my eyes! You can't, Mary. I will not shut my eyes to your prospect in the future. You know well, none would rejoice more than I to see you once more in a suitable and luxurious home of your own. And you shall not

take from me the conviction that I shall soon have the pleasure and delight of saluting you Mistress Hill, Queen of Dartmoor!"

"Hush, Sophia, hush!" said Mrs. Harcourt. "Indeed you are mistaken. You do not know Mr. Hill. He would as soon think of having a world's fair, like our present Great Exhibition, on the top of one of the Tors of Dartmoor, as of marrying again! He has been a widower eighteen years."

"Yes; but now that his only son is married, and Mr. Hill left 'alone in his glory,' the case is altered. You will accept this invitation?"

"I must think a little. It may be better to go," said Mrs. Harcourt, musingly; "but I confess I do not see my way. It is true that if I go I shall be able to silence for the future all this disagreeable gossip. It has its foundation only in the fact that Mr. Hill and Mr. Harcourt were such warm friends; and that since my dear husband's death Mr. Hill has shown a kind desire not to lose sight of me in my altered fortunes—that is all."

"How can you be so hypocritical, Mary?" said Mrs. Curzon with a sneer. "You cannot blind me to your future, unless you wilfully put aside what

lies within your grasp. And then his sister, Mrs. Russell, pray what did she say?"

"I do not remember," said Mrs. Harcourt wearily.

"Did she not say—'You will never be allowed to live alone. Only wait quietly a few months longer, and see what next year will produce; for you know you are a pattern woman in the eyes of those arbiters of our fate, men."

"Mere talk—mere kind-hearted flattery!"

"Has she not always told you, you are the only lady on whom Mr. Hill ever bestows a word of praise. Does she not say he is constantly instancing you, and saying—'Mrs. Harcourt would do so and so: Mrs. Harcourt understands this and that.'"

"All nonsense," said Mrs Harcourt quietly.

"And when you wrote to Mr. Hill in reply to a former invitation from him, and said you did not intend to visit, and must decline his kind proposal, what did he reply?—'You say you will not visit me. I say you shall.' I saw the letter!"

Mrs. Harcourt smiled as she said,

"And still, dear Sophia, I cannot hope that

the end will be as you say. I rather mean I have no just grounds for such a hope."

"But tell me this—Should you be surprised if he asked you to have him?"

"Nothing surprises me!" said Mrs. Harcourt as she turned away to avoid Mrs. Curzon's searching look.

And here we had better explain, that Mrs. Harcourt is the widow of the late Rev. John Harcourt, Rector of Mooraven. Through the death of her husband she had passed from affluence to comparative poverty; inasmuch as that now she had no settled home, nor income sufficient to allow of her taking and furnishing a residence, and hiring servants of her own.

Mrs. Harcourt's relatives and friends all "harped on the same string," her probable marriage with Mr. Hill, her husband's great friend.

Mrs. Curzon is Mrs. Harcourt's sister, living with her husband and family, in all the luxury and ease belonging to the position of a London merchant of high standing. She and others have prevailed on Mrs. Harcourt not to take measures for some permanent home in one of the many board-

ing houses in London—houses of refuge for ladies so situated—but to wait amongst her connexions the expiration of the two years of her widowhood, and the not very remote chance of proposals from Mr. Hill.

The two years have passed by, the crisis has arrived, and Mrs. Harcourt, as we have seen, is asked to fix her own time for a visit to Parson Hill.

CHAPTER XXV.

HOW THE NEW CURATE STOPPED THE BELLS, AND WHAT THE RINGERS HAD TO SAY.

IN the course of a few days Mary Cope felt sufficiently recovered to take her customary walks with Susan, and permitted herself to be taken, as her cousin said, "just to see how the old lady at the smithy was getting on; and if they did happen to see Isaac, why, she could say good-bye to him," for her fortnight of absence had expired.

Mary did not look upon Isaac's evident admiration of Susan with other than a troubled mind. She was vexed to see her so attractive in his eyes; and yet, with a strange perversity, she felt that she would not accept him, even if he were to ask her

to have him. She had been flattered by his coming to inquire for her after her fall, much gratified by his evident sorrow at her indisposition, and softened by his humble and gentle manner. But when, on his last visit, Isaac's well-known vice was made so clear to her understanding, and so offensive to her own personal sensitiveness, Mary resigned all thought of him as being connected with herself in the future. But still, like the dog in the manger, she felt equally averse to seeing him the husband of Susan Picard.

As it happened on this visit to the smithy by the two young women, the Widow Simpson was alone. She explained that there was a funeral, and that, according to custom, Isaac had gone to ring.

While the three sat talking, the mournful peal of the village bells broke upon the stillness of the air, and Mary and Susan paid the old woman some compliments on her grandson's skill in ringing.

"Mr. Isaac is so very clever," said Susan, admiringly.

"I am told he takes after his grandfather," said Mary. "I remember hearing, when I came first

to Lawsleigh, that Isaac Simpson was by far the cleverest man in these parts."

"There be no mistake about that," said the widow. "Isaac was larned in most things—rest his saule."

The bells at this instant, instead of continuing their mellifluous sound, appeared to come to a sudden halt in the middle of a peal, and excepting the unmeaning tang of a bell now and then, and as if rung accidentally, the peal was heard no more. In the course of the next ten minutes Isaac and the ringers came up to the shed in a state of great excitement.

"I tell you it be not lawful by no means," said one.

"Him be a fine coorit, to not to know the rights about bells!" said another.

"What be amiss? Be the bells broked?" said the Widow Simpson.

"Why, widdy, here be a coorit as must have come from some outlandisher place, wheere men knows nothing, coz why, he be ignorant about church bells!"

"Not know about church bells!" said the

widow. "Havena they got no bells in his village, where he have a-been living?"

"Oh! they have bells enough!" said Isaac, angrily. "How can the parson give us such a curate?—he is more ignorant than any little child in Lawsleigh village, for he does not know when the church bells ought to be rung!"

"Do not say nothing against the passon, Isaac," said the widow; "him be a kindly, gude man, and him knows when the bells must be ringed, and him can ring his own self—the passon can."

"But what has been the matter?" ventured Susan, to a young man standing by her side.

"Why, miss, in course us was ringing the peal after the burial—as us be in duty bound to do—and the new coorit—forbye he be called Mister Gray—comes up and stops the peal. Isaac, theere, spoke up to the coorit, and told him us was a-doing us duties; and then the coorit spoke up to Isaac, and us was obliged to come away."

Susan, who was no wiser for this explanation, held her peace. She had a great dislike to exposing her own ignorance, the consequence of

which was that she shut up from herself many sources of information and improvement.

"What!" said one, "be us to die, and have no peal?"

"The coorit be larned in sermons—I have heard Nanny Smerdon say as his sermons be fine," said the widow; "and mayhap him does not know about bells."

"Maybe as the passon will larn he betterer, widdy," said one.

"But gude save us, Isaac, lad, be us to have no bells? What be they poor dying creatures to do when there be no 'saule bell' to call the passon?" said the widow; "and us gude Christians can't say no prayers if us doesna have the 'saule bell." And the old woman wiped away her tears with the corner of her apron.

"But the curate seems a very gentlemanly person," said Susan. "You are speaking of Mr. Gray?"

"Yes, miss; it be Mister Gray, the coorit—him be uncommon ignorant about bells, surely."

"The new coorit must come from long ways off," said old Jacob Smerdon; "and it be my thinking, widdy, as theere must be places as got

no bells—coz why?" continued he, drawing himself up to his full height, and looking round upon the ringers, "where theere be bells, theere be them as knows how to ring them, and what for they be ringed; us have had bells from *generashion* to *generashion;* and us knows how to ring them from *generashion* to *generashion;* and us knows what for they be ringed from *generashion* to *generashion.*"

And Jacob struck his stick on the stone floor of the shed to give force to his words.

"Yes, us knows how to ring them, Jacob, and us knows what for they be ringed," chorussed the men.

"Maybe the new coorit never heard no bells," said one.

"Oh! nonsense," said Isaac, impatiently, "he has heard bells enough; but it seems to me he does not know the times and seasons when they are appointed to be rung. He said we must not ring after a funeral—what does he mean? Can we go against the rules of the Church at his command? We are the ringers—what then is our duty?"

"Go to the passon, Isaac, lad, and ax him?" said old Jacob Smerdon.

"Here be James Marvel a-coming up the village," said one; "him will know what us be to do."

"What be you about, you ringers?—what a mess you have made of the peal!" said James, "stopping short in the middle that ways—what be you about?"

"It be the new coorit, James—him has a-been and stopped the bells; us thinks as him must be a outlandisher—coz why? him be uncommon ignorant about bells."

"Him stopped us from ringing after a funeral."

"Lor' bless you!—the new coorit!" said James.

"James, lad, can you tell whereto the new coorit was born?" said the widow.

"What, the new coorit!" said James, looking very dignified; "it be true, widdy, as I have a-heard the master and the coorit a-talking together, and I have a-heard the coorit say, 'Us in Oxford do a-this fashions;" thereby, widdy, us would *na*turally think as the new coorit was born in Oxford."

"Be there no bells there?" said the widow.

"Can't say, widdy," said James; "in course and the new coorit so ignorant about bells, us would *na*turally think not."

"Be Oxford a outlandlisher place, James?" said Jacob Smerdon.

"Can't say, Jacob," said James; "coz why, I have not never been there."

"Theere be law about bells, I have heard say," said the widow. "The new coorit cannot go against the law, can he?"

"The passon will larn he the law, widdy," said Jacob. "Coorits comes to passons to be learned to do passon's work, and then they be passons theyselves afterwards."

"The coorit said as us hadna no right to ring a peal after a burial, James," said one. "Him be a fine coorit, and I sim as he'll make a fine passon, to not to know about they bells!"

"It is a rule of the Church," said Isaac, sternly. "I cannot understand how Mr. Gray can put aside such rules."

"Young ones be young ones, Isaac," said James; "and us as be older must allowance accordingly.

But," continued he, as he shook his head gravely, "it be a uncommon queer thing to take a-top of his young shoulders a-stopping a peal after a burial."

"Him said as us hadna no right to ring the peal afore the burial, same as us always has done from generashion to generashion," said Jacob. "And if us be not to ring they bells afore a burial, and if us be not to ring they bells after a burial, when be us to ring they bells? Can you tell I that?" And again he tapped his stick on the floor.

"The bells have not been 'falled,' James," said Isaac.

"Massy me! Isaac, lad, be they bells expected to 'fall' theyselves?" said James.

"As the new coorit doesna know nothing about bells," said the widow, "in course he thinks as they would 'fall' theyselves."

"Oh! but him be ignorant, widow."

"Suppose," said Isaac, putting up his finger, and arresting the attention of the men—"suppose when a curate, who is ignorant on the subject of bells, takes upon himself to stop a peal in the

middle, and so leaves the bells out of place—suppose it was the law that the curate should 'fall' the bells himself!"

The shout that greeted this supposition of Isaac's made the walls of the old shed ring.

"He would have something to do, would he not?" said Isaac, with a sneer.

"Ay, lad, ay," said old Jacob. "But as him be so ignorant about bells, it sim to I as he might fall they bells down on his own self."

"It be all right, Jacob," clamoured the men, as they surrounded him. "When coorits be such ignorant folk they must expect as something will happen out of the common."

"Isaac, lad," said Jacob, "shall us go to the new coorit, and tell he, as he have a-stopped they bells when he hadna no business to, as us won't never 'fall' they, but as him must do it his own self?"

Again the men shouted, and filled the air with their boisterous mirth.

Isaac smiled a grim sort of satisfactory smile, but he made no reply. The men thumped him on the back, and asked him to lead the way; but though Isaac was both angry and indignant at

this uncalled-for interference on the part of Mr. Gray, he declined to accede to Jacob's proposal.

But the men went away in great good humour. The idea of the new curate being called upon to perform the impossible feat of "falling the bells" himself tickled their fancy; and they told the Widow Simpson "not to be feared, for they feeled sure that Isaac would still be 'cock of the walk,' in spite of that uncommon ignorant coorit."

CHAPTER XXVI.

WHICH INTRODUCES TWO NEW CHARACTERS, AND TELLS OF PARSON HILL'S TROUBLES.

AT the time the bells of Lawsleigh were so unceremoniously stopped, Parson Hill was riding across the moor, and after a second or two of doubt and listening, he checked his horse, and sat quietly waiting to hear the peal resume its broken strain. When he was convinced the ringing would not be resumed, he let his horse walk slowly on as he said to himself,

"What can be the matter?—umph!—a bell-rope broken; and yet that is not to be expected, for there is no stint of new ropes, for the men take good care to apply to me the holder of 'the bell-rope pightel,' and keep their gear in good order;" and, after a pause, he resumed, "Now, if

this has happened through any misconduct on the part of Isaac Watson, I will—I really do think I will show him no mercy!"

And he put his horse into a trot, and pressed his lips firmly together, as he recalled the fact that Isaac had actually visited at Mary Cope's cottage when in a state of intoxication; and even granting that his visit was to Susan Picard—which he did not doubt—he still objected to such companionship for Mary.

Parson Hill eventually went on at a quicker pace. As a rule, he was extremely well-informed of all things happening in his parish, yet he rarely, if ever, searched into causes for this or that, but patiently waited until by ordinary means the subject was brought before him. And in this case, though he did not dismiss from his mind the fact of the bells coming thus suddenly to a stop, he lost no time in conjecture, but, to use his own expression, allowed his mind "to steady itself," by remembering it was best to let occurrences unfold, or settle themselves without interference on his part. But when he arrived at Paul Tavey, Mrs. Hill, the wife of his only son, accused him of

having a brow more overclouded with care than usual.

"And I have more cares on my shoulders," said he.

"Then pray let us share them," said the lady.

"Bear ye one another's burdens," quoted the parson; and then he added, "but it would not be fair that you should share mine."

"Why not?"

"Because I suffered myself to have them thrust upon me, and ought therefore patiently to endure them."

"That is a very ingenious way of preventing one from loving one's neighbour."

"I deny that. I give you permission to love me as much as you please."

"I do so—I indulge myself womanfully. And now, by the thraldom of that love, dear sir, I ask you to let me share your trouble?"

"Trouble!—oh! you quite mistake me—I have no heartache, but I will tell you all my other aches and pains."

"Gout and rheumatism!" laughed the lady.

"Madame, no!" said the parson, with a stately

bow; "you shall hear—first, an elegantly dressed and very pretty London miss, with a voice like Malibran, and whom I permitted my schoolmistress to invite for change of air; and next," here the parson gave a slight but perceptible groan, "the new curate, who, you, madame, and you, Charlie, would insist, was required, because—because of my increasing infirmities."

"Gray is a capital fellow," said Mr. Charles Hill.

"Humph!" said the parson, putting his hat on the carpet, and laying his whip across it.

"Here, Charlie, take away this hat and whip, and these gloves," which Parson Hill threw carelessly into his hat, "for you must stay and see all we have done," said the lady.

"Must I?" said the parson, doubtfully.

"You will stay all night?" said she, eagerly. "Say yes?"

"Indeed I must return home," said Parson Hill, shaking his head, "as soon as I have had a good look at you both."

"Why so?—why must you go?" said Charlie.

"Gray will send the crier after me."

"I did not know you possessed so wonderful a personage at Lawsleigh," said the lady.

"No; you do not know half as much about us as you ought," said Parson Hill.

"What can you mean?" said the lady.

"Gray says, 'I must look after my parish,' while I have not the most remote idea that it will attempt to run away. He says, too, 'I must not ride across country'—where then am I to ride? Perhaps he will ask me to walk—and over such roads. I dare say he will try to put a veto on my going to the Exhibition, whereas I made a point of having him three months earlier than I intended, on purpose that I might feel myself unhampered, and so enjoy the 'world's fair,' like a sober-minded parson as I am." And after a little pause, he continued, "Therefore, all things considered, you will understand I cannot stay and sleep here."

"You are laughing at us," said the lady; "you *shall* stay—I decree that."

"In spite of Mr. Gray—or to spite him," said the parson.

"Both," said she.

"Well, well, I give it up," laughed the parson; "I will lunch with you, but I would rather return home for dinner."

"And now that we have managed to agree thus far," said Mrs. Hill, "tell us what makes Mr. Gray such a bugbear?"

"Indeed, he is not at all a bugbear; on the contrary, he is a handsome man," said Parson Hill.

"We know that—but why is he a thorn in your side?"

"He is so active and zealous; I have hardly time to eat my meals, or saunter about my grounds, or even to muse over the past and ponder on the present. And then he is so well-read, and well-bred, and well-dressed."

"Ah! you are jealous," said the lady.

"Just so," said the parson with a smile.

"Because you are all three, and have hitherto——"

"I thank those angel lips for thus so kindly restoring me to my self-love," said Parson Hill energetically. "Gray does not admire my style of dress; he says I must wear black—so I do on proper occasions—but at all times and seasons, hot

or cold, wet or dry, at home and abroad, I must wear black, because 'the clergy always wear black.'"

Mrs. Hill looked surprised, but did not speak, and Charlie laughed aloud.

"He says," resumed Parson Hill, "I must not wear top-boots, or blue coats, or other garments not necessary to mention—would he like me to go without? He would make me very uncomfortable indeed, and—but you think I may still continue to wear what I please?—and still pride myself on keeping up one of the requirements of my college when I matriculated—to be *bene vestito*."

And the parson drew himself up to his full height, and gazed from one to the other as they sat eagerly listening to this account of himself. At length Charlie said laughingly,

"Gray is one of the 'high and dry,' and you are——"

"High and dry! Nay, Charlie, Gray is not tall, and I have not had a ducking since I was ten years old, therefore, I may add, I am as 'dry' as Gray—what do you mean?"

"And so Gray bothers you?"

"Wrong again, sir—I disdain to allow myself to be what you call 'bothered.' I tell you he says, 'I must take care of my parish!' Now, speaking with all humility," said the parson, bowing, "I thought he was paid to do that. But in even justice, I must add that he says of himself, 'he has looked it up, and walked it over; he finds it in a state of abominable pools, sloughs, bogs and fogs, —what will he say in the winter?—'and hills, and stones, and water-courses, some wet, some dry; and the people so ignorant, they cannot speak their own language. Does he find them speak French, or German, or Greek, or Latin?"

Parson Hill paused; but, as no remark was made, he resumed enthusiastically,

"Does Mr. Gray know what is their own language? Does he know that these people have spoken this patois from century to century?—ay, and they would still go on from century to century, ignorant of the wonders outside their beloved moor, if it were not for the arrival of the great iron horse! That famous horse, which, in the last thirty years, has brought about more changes, and been the cause of more innovations

than have taken place in hundreds of years previously—that horse will, at length, link this moor to the rest of the world; the people will mix with others, civilization will come to them here, and then they may, in the course of a few generations, learn to speak English! But at this time they *do* speak their own language—the vernacular of the moor; and also—as if I had not told you enough—and also, Mr. Gray has kindly fed the poor ignorant minds of these poor ignorant people with a few trashy tracts."

"Tracts!" said Mrs. Hill.

"Tracts," said the parson. "But let me do him justice—not 'the Oxford tracts,' I ascertained that."

"He must be 'low and slow' if he goes about with tracts," said Charlie.

"He is neither, I assure you," said Parson Hill; "his motions are all rapid; his words come out with great velocity; I expect he was born in an express train, poor fellow! And, although he is by no means large and tall as I am, he is very nearly your own height, Charlie. So pray find some other epithet, for clearly Gray is neither low nor slow."

"But the pretty girl from London," said Mrs. Hill, "tell us how she managed to torment you. I thought you were quite beyond the reach of even the prettiest girl in the world!"

"And I humbly trust I am," said the parson, with a low bow. "And, again, if there is any tormenting in the case, it is I who have tormented her."

"That is impossible," laughed the lady.

"You then have a good opinion of me," said Parson Hill; "I wish Gray had," and he affected to sigh.

"And he will not let you go to the Exhibition?" said Charlie.

"If I ask him, he will surely say no; he is so good himself, he likes to make others as good through the virtue of self-denial. I candidly confess it would be a piece of most heroic self-denial on my part *not* to go to this 'World's Fair' —my heart is so full of vanity!"

"And now your care-clouded brow is accounted for," said Mrs. Hill; "your spirit is full of vexation."

"Unquestionably," said the parson, with a bland smile.

"We go to town next week," said Charlie.

"No doubt you intend to take me with you?" said the parson.

"Yes; all our plans include you," said Mrs. Hill.

"Then I cannot help myself—I must go; and I will tell Gray I could not find in my heart to spoil your plots; in point of fact, I was a party to them."

"Then you promise to go with us?"

"I promise. So now I have fairly outwitted Gray, for he cannot ask me to break my promise—he is too good for that. But will you credit me? He actually wants to take the school children, bread and born on Dartmoor, with their steady little mistress, to see this Great Exhibition! Did you ever listen to so mad an idea?"

"It is quite the custom, I assure you, sir," said Charles, "not only to take schools, but choirs, and, in some cases, whole villages!"

"Houses as well as inmates?—to the Exhibition? Is the whole world gone mad?" said Parson Hill.

"To the Exhibition—the people, not the cottages," said Charlie, laughing.

"And are these schools, choirs, and villages, sent to be exhibited?" said Parson Hill; "and if so, pray how are they shewn off?—and under what auspices?"

"They shew themselves off to the keen-eyed and awe-stricken Londoners, under the auspices of their own barbaric pomp and singularities," said Mrs. Hill.

"And pray is the vicar of the parish—unhappy wretch!—expected to exhibit himself at the same time?" said Parson Hill.

"Many are proud of such a distinction," said Charlie; "but there are good men and true among the magnates of the Church, who put aside their own selfish craving for the pomps and vanities of this world, and allow them to culminate in clustering glory round the aspiring brows of their curates!"

"Is it possible!" said Parson Hill; "their abnegation of self is a bright example. I will follow in their steps. I will let all the glory and all the honour fall on the shoulders of Gray, on condition that he marches with the parish and the schools, and the choir. And I will take all the expense of the journey on my own shoulders, on condition

that I may be allowed to stay at home, and—and —'take care of my parish.'"

"You incorrigible creature! Why, there will not be any one left to care for!" said Mrs. Hill.

"Except myself, who am of no value," said the parson.

"You shall come to us," said Charlie.

"Or you to me, and so try to enliven the parish in the absence of its customary inhabitants."

"Have you heard from Mrs. Harcourt?" said the lady.

"Yes; she replied by return of post. She refuses me. She says the Exhibition has more attractions than my Hermitage, and——"

"I cannot credit that," said Mrs. Hill.

"She hints as much, I assure you—for she says, 'After you have seen the "World's Fair" will suit me better than at present, if equally convenient to you.' It seems she did not know we should go to town so early. How should she indeed? I did not know myself."

"Wise—wise Mrs. Harcourt!" said Mrs. Hill; "for when you once return from that holiday trip,

you will ensconce yourself safely on your dear moor for many months to come."

"Well, what then?" said Parson Hill.

"Then there will be nothing to disturb or cut short her very agreeable visit, to a charmingly situated Hermitage, or her very pleasant conversations with a very dignified and very fascinating host."

"Ah!—you women!—you women!" said Parson Hill, shaking his head. "But while I think of it, let me say, you and Charlie had better pack up for London, as soon as may be, and come to me. And for this reason, you are so far from civilization, I should not marvel much if you had never seen a railway station. Now I——"

"Living in the world as you do," interrupted the lady.

"I am within ten miles of a station," continued Parson Hill, laughing and shaking his head at Mrs. Hill.

"And, on Monday, we can travel express, for we can reach N—— in time for that train. What say you? Will you come?"

"Thank you. I says yes," said the lady. "What do you say, Charlie?"

"Your slightest wish is my law," said Charles, demurely.

"And now it is my turn to say, 'Oh, you men!—you men!'" said Mrs. Hill, shaking her head at Charlie.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WHICH ACCOUNTS FOR THE BROKEN PEAL AND LOOKS INTO PARSON HILL'S THOUGHTS.

ON his return home, Parson Hill overtook Mr. Gray about a mile from the Parsonage; on seeing whom the polite parson dismounted, and, hanging the bridle rein over his arm, walked by Mr. Gray's side. It was now that the stopping of the bells was accounted for, as Mr. Gray of his own accord commenced the subject with

"The men rang a peal after the funeral this morning—or rather began to ring, for I thought it my duty to prevent such conduct."

"To prevent the men ringing?" said the parson.

"Certainly; could anything be more distressing to the feelings of the surviving relatives and friends?"

"Distressing!—nay, sir, consolatory," said the parson.

"Consolatory!—uproarious bells clanging forth after a funeral consolatory?"

"Uproariously clanging!—nay, then, that is unpardonable—how could it have happened?—were the men our own ringers?—the usual set?"

"The leader is, I should think, the ringleader of all the evils that infest this poor parish," said Mr. Gray.

"Ringleader!—of—of evils?—who, sir?"

"Isaac Walton."

"Umph!—I thought that man died many years ago. How can he encroach upon my parish now?"

"The blacksmith at the entrance to the village, Isaac Walton—or—or Waller."

"Ah!—he who wrote verses to my lady Dorothy Sidney," said the parson; "and is he alive now?"

"The blacksmith!—a big man, with a red face and a rough tongue," said Mr. Gray; for the confusion he had made in names irritated him.

"Perhaps you mean Isaac Watson?" said the parson in a suave tone; "he *is* tall, and his face

has a florid hue; but the man talks well, sir, extremely well; he is in fact a wonder—a perfect wonder, on this moor, for from his earliest years he has been a reader; and of what do you accuse him?"

The parson was now, in his own mind, taking Isaac's part against Mr. Gray. He had for the time being quite forgotten his intention of "making an example of him" on the very first opportunity, for Parson Hill did not feel pleased with Mr. Gray for taking the liberty of stopping the peal.

"Was he tipsy?" continued the vicar, after a slight pause.

"They were all drunk, you may be very sure."

"All drunk!" said the parson, standing still, and thereby checking his horse.

"Yes, I repeat it, all drunk!—you seem astonished—do you think that sober men would ring a peal after a funeral?"

After a pause of some slight duration, Parson Hill said, in a softened tone,

"Yes."

"Yes!—you think men who were sober would ring a peal after a funeral!—you do?"

"Of course they would," said Parson Hill, in

a decided tone; "and pray, sir, why not?" and the parson resumed his walk.

"Why not!—gracious Heaven, Mr. Hill! excuse me. Do you not think that the husband of the poor woman I buried will be groaning in spirit over his heavy loss!—then why should the bells peal forth as if for joy?"

"The spirit of the man may yearn for his lost wife," said Parson Hill, in a gentle tone, "but his spirit hopes to rejoin her spirit, and it is a custom in our Church, probably obsolete in many places now, that the bells shall be rung in peal, to tell him 'not to sorrow as those who have no hope,' for that 'the soul of her who has gone hence is now in joy and happiness.'"

"How can he tell that? It is surely presumptuous to suppose it."

"Our Church commands," said Parson Hill, impressively, "that the bells shall ring out in solemn cheerfulness after a funeral. And we may all humbly hope to be one of those whom our Saviour died to save; or, in other words, that she whom you buried is now in peace and joy. Will you dine with me?"

"Thank you, not to-day," said Mr. Gray.

"When shall I see you?—I go to town on Monday, and must therefore first make some arrangements with you."

"You are going to the Exhibition!" said Mr. Gray, in a tone of great surprise.

"I am," said the vicar, with a smile.

"And have you thought over my proposal of taking the school, and perhaps some others, to see this grand 'World's Fair?'" said Mr. Gray.

"Yes, yes. I want to talk it over with you. Since you cannot come to-day, are you engaged on Friday?"

"No; I shall have much pleasure——"

"At six, if you please," said Parson Hill.

"I thank you, yes. Good morning," said Mr. Gray; and he muttered to himself, as Mr. Hill mounted his horse and rode away, "And there he rides off to his own good dinner, in much fear that the trout will be spoiled, or the soup cold, or—in short, he is a veritable type of a clergyman of the old school—full of himself, forgetful of the rest of the world!"

While Parson Hill also muttered to himself,

"And as you take the liberty of always coming half an hour late, I shall take the precaution to order dinner accordingly."

And now Parson Hill has dined. He has not, however, left the dining-room, for, comfortably seated in an easy chair, he is indulging in a reverie on the subject of "Isaac Watson, the ringleader of all the evils of this poor parish;" of the bells, and Mr. Gray's strange ignorance; of the ringers, and Mr. Gray's extraordinary accusation, "All drunk!" Even Parson Hill, who considered himself a person of some experience, had never known, either in his own parish or any other, "all the ringers drunk at one time;"—and of the poor ignorant people who could not speak their own language.

"That language that is dead or unknown to Mr. Gray, though a living one on Dartmoor," said the parson to himself, "and the current tongue of its inhabitants. They may be uneducated," mused he, "but they understand all the ancient customs of our Church; they may be ignorant, but they live in the knowledge of God, and the blessing of a Saviour; they may be heathens in speech, in looks, and in manners, but they are Christians in

their kindliness and charity to each other; they speak the language of their ancestors and the locality, and they look like what they are—dwellers on Dartmoor, far from the haunts of fashion and her ever-changing gewgaws, and they have the manners of their class; and if these manners are somewhat odd and strange in the eyes of better educated people, they are at least free from affectation, and, if unpolished, sincere. Now it seems to me," said the parson, speaking to himself, "that if the 'cloth,' as he called the clergy," and the parson elevated his eyebrows, "understood more of the ancient customs of our Church, and thought less of their own 'black' coats, the world might benefit thereby. He prides himself"—by *he* the parson meant Mr. Gray—"on his 'black coat,' and stops the bells from 'ringing out in solemn cheerfulness' after a funeral! He opens his eyes wide at the sight of my small-clothes and top-boots—a convenient costume to ride in—and I open mine wider at his unpardonable ignorance! For, though I grant that many of the ancient customs of our Church are obsolete in cities, towns, or thickly-peopled places, that is no excuse for his

want of knowledge. As an educated man, and, above all, as a clergyman, he should be well 'up' in the Church from her earliest times. But he stopped the bells after a funeral! Why, the moor people will not understand him!—how should they? And as to the men being 'all drunk,' I do not believe it. I know as a rule ringers are a sad lot; but these men are better than most others. Isaac and Jacob are the two worst; but I do not believe either of them would go to ring a funeral peal in a state of intoxication—I cannot! No, no, it is all wrong. I had no business with a curate, for a curate fresh from Oxford and London, and 'black coats'"—here the parson shrugged his shoulders—"and patent leather boots, cannot so well manage to balk a bog of its prey as I who have lived here the best part of my life. But I managed to mystify him charmingly," and the parson chuckled at the thought. And then, resuming his soliloquy, he said,

"It is true I rode in 'pink' when I first came to this moor; but not of late years—no, no. And it is also true that the other day, when I put in to Culmstor in the dreadful storm, wet to the skin,

my kind old friend lent me a faded old pink to ride home in—a 'pink,' because it was the only one in the house sufficiently large for me, ha! ha! ha! I scarcely knew myself when I entered my dressing-room; even now I cannot help laughing at my strange appearance. The pink did me right good service then; it has done me a better *now*, since the recollection of it helped me to make that 'wonderful young gentleman in black' elevate his eyebrows.

"And then again Gray says, 'The moor people have been standing still for centuries,' and I say, 'Stand on, good friends, stand on! The ancient formula of our Church, if obsolete elsewhere, will do us no harm on Dartmoor.' We—I include myself with you, my people—we shall not go over to Rome, for we seldom roam from home," and the parson chuckled in his easy chair. "Gray may have an inkling that way, though I do not wish to accuse him, and so deems it necessary to keep temptation from his eyes and his ears.

"'I must take care of my parish.'" The parson felt rather sore on this point. "I wish I could kick Gray out of it! What an egregious ass I

must have been to give him a title!—a title to preach to me! A young, hot-headed, black——"

But here the parson's reverie was interrupted, and we lost for ever the concluding word, by the announcement that Isaac Watson wished to see him.

"This is an unusual hour," said Parson Hill; "Isaac knows it is against my rule to see any one after dinner."

"Yes, sir; but Isaac asked me to tell you that he would not have intruded upon you now but for something of importance."

Parson Hill remembered the stopping of the bells, and, connecting Isaac's untimely visit with this unusual occurrence, he said,

"I will see him in the library."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WHICH TREATS OF THE LIVING AND THE DEAD—THE PAST AND THE PRESENT.

ISAAC'S business with Parson Hill was to tell him that, in consequence of Mr. Gray stopping the peal, the bells were not "falled." Mr. Gray had taken Isaac's keys, to prevent the ringers having the power to re-enter the belfry; but Isaac, understanding bells as he did, knew that they ought not to be left in that position, and now came to the vicar for advice.

We need only add that, as Mr. Hill was as learned on the subject of bells as Isaac, he saw immediately what ought to be done, gave Isaac his own keys, and told him to collect the men and "fall" the bells.

When Isaac went away, Parson Hill did as he

had previously informed Mr. Gray he was accustomed to do. He took off his blue coat, opened the door of a closet, and hung it up on a peg; then he put on his comfortable wrap, and then he lighted his agreeable pipe. When the fingers of the clock on the mantelpiece pointed to ten minutes past nine, George brought coffee.

George had lived with Parson Hill for nearly twenty years, and on this occasion, while handing coffee to his master, he said,

"They say, sir, that Parson Melson is very ill."

"Melson of Tiddycombe?" said Mr. Hill; "I am sorry to hear it."

"Yes, sir—old Mr. Melson—he was so ill at Totnes great market on Wednesday, that he could not ride home. Mrs. Taylor was obliged to drive him home in the dog-cart."

"Bless me! George; when did you hear this?"

"I heard it several days ago. Totnes great market was last week, but the postman said this morning that Mr. Melson was much worse."

"Worse, George! You should have told me this before now," and the parson turned to look at the clock.

"Dr. Beanie from Ashburton has attended him all along, but yesterday they sent to the station at N——, to telegraph for Dr. Leader from Plymouth, and Dr. Shapgood from Exeter."

"You should have told me this before, George."

"I thought you knew, sir. They say he won't recover!"

"I did not know!" said the parson, in a reproachful tone. "Who was to tell me of Melson's illness? Order the carriage to come round in half an hour."

"Yes, sir," and George turned to look at the clock. "At twenty minutes to ten, sir?"

"In half an hour," said the vicar, sipping his coffee.

"Yes, sir," and George turned to leave the room. "The carriage, sir?"

Parson Hill did not reply immediately. Thought is rapid, and he thought—"Ah! I suppose it is a good deal of trouble to get the carriage ready at so late an hour, and so I do not mind if I ride." And then, speaking to George, he said:

"You may order 'Sir Harry,' George. I can ride."

"Yes, sir; in half an hour?"

"In half an hour."

"'Sir Harry,' sir?"

"'Sir Harry!' yes, 'Sir Harry!'"

And now the vicar spoke in a tone of command, and yet he condescended to add:

"The bay mare has had her gallop to-day, and 'Butterfly' does not like the moon, and——"

"There is no moon, sir," said George, closing the door, and coming up to Parson Hill as if the conversation interested him.

"'Sir Harry' will not mind that," said the vicar, quietly.

"Won't he, sir. But, sir, you'll excuse me, sir?"

The parson sipped his coffee, and did not raise his head.

"You will excuse me, sir?"

"That depends upon circumstances, George," said Parson Hill, leaning back in his chair, and looking fixedly at him.

"Yes, sir, of course, sir," said George, with a smile. "But if you must go all across the country at this time of night——"

The man paused, and the parson again sipped his coffee.

"If you must, sir: and no moon, sir: and Parson Melson quite dead by this time, sir——"

The parson raised his head and looked sternly at George.

"Mr. Melson must have died by this time, sir," said the man.

"Then I will close his eyes, George," said the parson, as he returned the empty coffee-cup; and he added to himself, "the man is trying to prevent me from going."

"And now, George, no delay," said the vicar, as he rose from his chair. "In five minutes bring 'Sir Harry,' round."

"Yes, sir, 'Sir Harry!'"

And the man left the room.

Parson Hill's thoughts were pre-occupied with the news of Mr. Melson's illness, but he continued to make the necessary preparations for his ride across the moor.

At length George re-entered the library.

"Who is to go with you, sir?" said George.

As Parson Hill always rode unattended, he

did not condescend to reply to this query.

"It is a dark night, sir; it will rain before morning."

"Rain is much wanted, George," said the parson, as he buttoned his coat.

"Yes, sir, but not to-night, when you will ride across country in spite of everything!"

"I do not feel spiteful, George," said the vicar, with a smile.

"No, sir, of course not. But who is to go with you, sir?"

"You, George," said Parson Hill, in a tone of command.

But George was an indoor servant—a sort of factotum—and did not ride.

"I am sure, sir, you ought not to go alone all across country, and such numbers of bogs!"

"I shall not be alone if you go with me, George."

"True, sir; but how am I to go?"

"You may ride 'Butterfly,'" said the parson, turning round to hide his laughter.

"Oh—h! yes, sir; but I know that won't do, sir; and so, sir, who is to take care of you?"

"You, George," said the imperturbable parson.

"I have been thinking, sir, had you not better have the carriage, and let Marvel drive you?"

"I asked you for the carriage at first, George, and you seemed unwilling to let me have it; but just give me that good thick walking-stick, and as it seems to me that you do not mean to let me have either the carriage, or 'Sir Harry,' or 'Butterfly,' or the moon, or the rain, or even yourself, George, to take care of me, I think I will set off and walk to Tiddycombe Vicarage alone."

"Yes, sir; but I hope you will excuse me, sir," —and the reader will surely say that George is as imperturbable as his master—"but I *did* take the liberty, sir, to order the carriage, and Marvel to drive you, for it is not safe to go across this moor," —at this instant the hall door bell rang—"and that must be the carriage now, sir, if you will excuse me?"

"I have not time to excuse you now, George, but on my return we can go into the subject; and if I find such a proceeding impracticable, you will——"

"Yes, sir, of course."

"Of course what, George?" said the vicar, as he was getting into the carriage.

"I am sure, sir, I do not know," said George as he closed the carriage door. And then turning to Marvel, who held the reins, he continued,

"Mind how you drive, James. It is a shameful country to go across on a dark——"

"Drive on, Marvel," said the vicar. And George's last words were not heard.

"Now if I were as young and inexperienced as Mr. Gray, I daresay I should think George an impertinent and meddling old fool!" said the vicar to himself. "He is to a certain extent like all servants who have lived many years with one master, he takes an interest in everything; and because he takes an interest, he gives an opinion, and sometimes thinks he knows better than his master. Perhaps he does; it is not a difficult matter to know more than I."

And here it is necessary to say a few words to introduce Mr. Melson, though he will not take any part in our story.

Mr. Melson was one of that class of the clergy who farmed his own glebe—it may be said many

do that; true, they do. But Mr. Melson, in the dress of a farmer, worked with his men as a farmer on Dartmoor would work, and carried on every operation of a large farm in full work, under his own eye. He bought and sold; bred horses, and made money thereby; rode to market two or three times a week, and to all fairs of note within the counties of Devon and Cornwall, and at such times he gave himself to the farmers, and seated himself at the tables provided for them.

Until late years there was no school in his parish; no educated choir even now; no visiting of the sick at any time, that is as the clergyman of the parish, and comforter of the dying, though there was abundance of kind-hearted private charity. He spoke what is called "broad Devonshire," and in his farmer's dress under his gown, he has taken the Sunday duty in the church year by year; but for the remaining days in the week, he was to all intents and purposes a farmer.

In the latter days of his life, when the moor has been invaded by troops of tourists, curious little notes have been taken of Mr. Melson's sermons; but to use his own words—"You might as well

attempt to wash the blackamoor white"—as to change the Rev. Mr. Melson.

Mr. Melson was a well-known character in Devon and Cornwall. He was very learned in the localities and the history of Dartmoor, and trusted as an authority, and his name is mentioned with honour in several sterling works on that subject. He was a bold rider, and certainly in his day followed the hounds with the best of them—both he and his niece who lived with him, for Mr. Melson was a bachelor.

At the time that Parson Hill crossed the moor to visit him in his illness, Mr. Melson was in his eighty-third year.

Perhaps my readers wonder why, if the Rev. Mr. Melson has nothing to do with my story, he should be spoken of at all? If Parson Hill was such an anomaly to Mr. Gray, what would he have thought of the Rev. Mr. Melson? There was a much greater difference between him and Parson Hill, and greatly in favour of the latter, than between Parson Hill and the orthodox clergy of the present day. And yet they were contemporaries, and both had livings on Dartmoor. Mr. Melson

died soon after Parson Hill's visit. There are but few of the clergy now left on Dartmoor, if any, who were contemporaries with Parson Hill.

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN WHICH WE HEAR THE "JOY-BELLS," AND INTRODUCE MR. GRAY TO THE RINGERS.

AT the close of the week, and just as Parson Hill had entered his dressing-room to make his toilette before dinner, he was gratified by the sight of a travelling carriage driving up to his door.

"Charlie and his sweet wife, I do really think," said he, as he hastened down to receive them.

"Now this is truly kind," continued he, as he gave his hand to Mrs. Hill, and assisted her to alight.

"Too late for dinner, I fear?" said Charlie.

"No; by great good fortune," here the parson shrugged his shoulders, "Gray dines with me, and as, from experience, I know his engagements are

numerous, and his time much occupied in this enormous parish," spreading out his hands and affecting to sigh, "I usually give him a little law, and dine at seven instead of six. And so you are indebted to him for a hot dinner, and to me for a hearty welcome."

"We give our choicest smiles to the last, and make our best curtsy for the first," said Mrs. Hill, curtsying; "and we are so glad to come."

"And I am so glad to have you," said Parson Hill.

"What a charming drive it is from Paul Tavey to Lawsleigh!" said Mrs. Hill; "the Tors are magnificent, and they seem to be never ending; and what a sweet spot you have—this Hermitage of yours!"

"She has been in raptures all the drive," said Charlie.

"Charlie, dear," said Mrs. Hill, turning to speak to him before she entered the house, leaning on the vicar's arm—"Charlie dear, will you hasten—the—the—I must make my toilet."

"There, get away," said Charlie, impatiently—"as if I did not know."

At dinner, and while the soup was going round, the bells of Lawsleigh pealed forth a joyous sound.

"What fine bells!" said the lady.

"The men have evidently got scent of your arrival," said the parson. "There is a clash!—all in honour of yourself, fair madam."

Meanwhile, at the first attempt at raising the bells, Mr. Gray started, and, with evident surprise, appeared to be listening attentively.

When the eight bells were all raised and the musical peal came cheerily on the ear, he fidgeted on his chair, did not join in the conversation, did not hear if he were spoken to—or, at least, made no reply—did not touch his soup, and seemed annoyed and disturbed.

"George," said Parson Hill in a low voice, "change Mr. Gray's plate."

And the cold soup vanished, and was replaced by a hot cutlet of salmon. This arrested Mr. Gray's momentary attention, inasmuch as he mechanically helped himself to sauce when it was handed; but his mind still seemed absent from the present scene and company.

"What a magnificent peal!—do listen, Charlie!" said the lady; "these are indeed 'joy-bells.'"

"Clash, clash, and race, race, one after the other! They are a capital set of ringers—do not you think so, Gray?" said Charlie, who was quite unaware of Mr. Gray's delinquency in the matter of bells.

"Where could they get the keys?" said Mr. Gray, in an irritable tone.

"Change Mr. Gray's plate," said the parson; and the untouched cutlet was replaced by a *pâté*.

"The men have their own keys," said Charlie.

"This is my son's first visit to Lawsleigh since his marriage," explained the parson; "and our good old ringers, many of whom have known him from childhood, delight to testify their joy at his return home," and then, turning to George, he said in a lower tone, "remove Mr. Gray's plate."

But Mr. Gray prevented this order from being obeyed, by atacking the *pâté*—though he again relapsed into silence as he marvelled to himself,

"Where did they get the keys?"

And here we should explain that when, on the day the peal had been stopped, Mr. Gray parted

from Parson Hill, he did not return to his own lodgings, but walked some miles across the moor to dine with a friend in the next parish. Consequently, the fact of the bells having been touched since he stopped them on the morning of that day was unknown to him.

And thus it was that he sat ruminating on the probable or improbable means by which the ringers had contrived to repossess themselves of the keys of the belfry; and thus he lost his fish and soup while conjecturing on things past, instead of compelling his mind to amuse itself by the contemplation of things present.

And the party had assembled in the drawing-room, and the fumes of fragrant coffee and delicious tea scented the air. The windows were wide open; the moon was about ten days old, and not at a very high altitude, but her light was bright and clear.

Mrs. Hill stepped out of the window on to the lawn, enthusiastically pointing out now this Tor tipped with silver, now that in mighty shadow, when she suddenly grasped the arm of Parson Hill as she said,

"What have you there? Something moving amongst the shrubs?"

"The 'dimpse' (twilight) deceives you," said the parson, "no one will venture to intrude into my grounds."

"I saw the moon just light up for a moment the head of a tall man—a giant! he seemed to me!" said Mrs. Hill, "and even now I can see in the distance—"

"Yes, so do I," said Parson Hill, leaving the lady, and walking forward to meet the intruders, whom he evidently joined and conversed with; soon, however, he returned and explained,

"That the ringers had brought their hand-bells, to know if Master Charlie's Missus would like to hear them?"

Mrs. Hill looked puzzled and made no answer, but Charlie dashed across the lawn, and was seen, as the party drew nearer, coming round by the path, to be shaking hands with each man, and apparently bringing them all up to the drawing-room windows.

"Now, Jacob," said Charlie, as the men stood bowing to the parson and his party, and putting

his hand on the shoulder of a tall old man, "that is my Missus leaning on my father's arm!—Isaac," turning to another, "what do you think of her?"

"I hope you will make the lady a good husband, Master Charlie," said Isaac Watson.

"But you do not tell me what you think of her?" said Charlie, as he gave Isaac a friendly thump on the back.

Isaac looked shy, and tanged his bells; the men formed in a semicircle; and Parson Hill and the lady seated themselves on the garden chairs; while Mr. Gray came to the open window, and stood there sipping his coffee. At first, the sounds were only the soft and silvery imitations of the grand peal that had so recently been heard from the tower; but after a few minutes the peal stopped, and the men played, or rather rung, a well-known air with much precision and effect. When this was over, Charlie was enthusiastic in their praise, adding that "they had much improved since he had heard them last."

While Mrs. Hill said to the parson,

"Independent of the sweet tones of the bells, and the skill with which they are managed, I am

very much struck with the perfect ease and even grace of movement displayed by the ringers."

"Yes," said the parson, "and perhaps I shall surprise you when I say that the men try to acquire that graceful ease from the time they commence learning to ring, and think as much of managing their bells in an elegant unlaboured manner as you would of your superb curtsy."

Mrs. Hill laughed, and the men re-formed and played another tune. When they again stopped, Parson Hill said in a low voice to the lady,

"Now, if I take the liberty of presenting these men to you, do you think you can imagine yourself 'Queen of Dartmoor,' since I have no lawful Queen, and offer your hand for a Moorland salute?"

"What! to each of those men! For what do you take me? Marble!"

Parson Hill laughed.

"You are incorrigible!" said Mrs. Hill, shaking her head.

"Oh! no, no," said the parson, "only playful," and he once again drew her arm within his own, and approached the men.

"You play charmingly," said he—"you know you do; and I must have a turn with you one of these days; I do not like to forget my accomplishments—do I, Jacob?"

"Your honour was always skilled in they bells," said Jacob, looking much gratified.

"And now I wish to present you to Mrs. Hill, my Charlie's wife:—Jacob Smerdon, Isaac Watson, John Mead, John Crocker, Thomas Lear, Peter Jones, Matthew Skinner, and James Harden."

The men all bobbed their heads as they were named, and Charlie joined the group, and said,

"Now, Jacob, tell me what you think of my Missus?"

"You be uncommon full of tricks, Master Charlie," said Jacob.

"That is what you think of me. I know your opinion of me. Can't you tell me if my Missus 'be a bowerly woman?'" said Charlie, in the patois of the moor.

"Why do they call him *Master Charlie?*" said Mrs. Hill, in a low voice, to the parson, who laughed, and made no reply.

Cups of ale were now brought, and handed to

the men. Jacob Smerdon, as the oldest man present, stepped into the centre of the semicircle, and said,

"Us be cruel glad as Master Charlie's ha gotten a Missus. Us sees you bees a bowerly woman. Ees fè—Fags!—us be cruel glad!—An' us tell 't the ton tu the tother; eef in course as Master Charlie's ha gotten a Missus, us hops her bees gude and kind like tu Master Charlie, an' tu th' passon's own sen, an' us hops her bees bowerly. Here's tu yu, mum, an' us wissen ye mony yearn o' happiness."

And Jacob and the men then drank their ale, the men chorusing "us wissen ye mony yearn o' happiness."

"Now for your speech," said Charlie to his wife.

But as Mrs. Hill was in much the same predicament as the reader at this present moment, and as she had understood but few words of Jacob Smerdon's speech, we think that for her sake, as well as the reader's, we had better translate it into a readable tongue, viz.—

"We are very glad Master Charlie has a wife. We see you are a handsome woman; yes, faith!

and we are very glad. And we said one to another, if Master Charlie has a wife, we hope she will be good and kind like Master Charlie, and the parson himself, and we hope she is handsome. Here is your health, Madam, and we wish you many years of happiness."

And, as we have said, Mrs. Hill was called upon to reply.

"Oh no! indeed you must speak for me," said she.

"No," said Parson Hill, coming to her side, "give the men a word yourself."

Thus encouraged, and though she had not understood many words of Jacob Smerdon's speech, Mrs. Hill thanked the men for their kind wishes, and told them how much pleased she had been with the "joy-bells" from the tower, as well as with the beautiful tunes she had heard them ring on the small bells.

"I will ring with you to-morrow," said Charlie, "and we will have a 'grandsire triple.'"

"Yes, Master Charlie, if you please."

"What is a grandsire triple?" said Mrs. Hill.

"Every change is alternately in and out of

course," said Parson Hill, smiling; "the hand changes of the treble lead being 'out,' and the back stroke 'in.' "

"I do not know at all what you mean," said the lady.

"Back stroke changes," said Charlie, laughing, "and rounds cannot be brought at hand without turning the 'course' of the bell."

As Mrs. Hill looked only the more puzzled, Parson Hill joined Charlie in his laugh, and took up his explanation by saying,

"Courses, on account of the bell in the hunt, cannot be had complete; but this method is held in great estimation," added he, nonchalantly, "and a greater variety of 'touches' are introduced."

"We can 'bob' every fourth lead, or each time five, six, seven, come home," said Charlie. "And," continued he, "I should think, with so decidedly clear an explanation, you must quite understand what is meant by 'a grandsire triple.' "

Mrs. Hill and Charlie now stood and talked with the men, and delighted them by their affability and the interest they took in their ringing; while Parson Hill stepped back and talked with

Mr. Gray. In a short time the two latter gentlemen came forward, and Parson Hill said,

"And now you must allow me to introduce you all to my very good friend and representative, Mr. Gray." (Here he again mentioned the name of each man.) "He has kindly consented to come and live on our moor, and help me in my old age. At present our local customs, though themselves handed down from time immemorial, are new to him." (Here Mr. Gray looked uncomfortable.) "Nor can he know and appreciate you all so well as I who have lived the best part of my life amongst you; but we may reasonably hope that each day will bring him nearer to that kind of lore best suited for his position; and I am very sure that any friend or companion of mine, even though at present a stranger, you will all treat as kindly, and obey, where needful, as promptly as you do myself. I ask no more."

"Of course, your honour; yes, certainly," chorused the men, as they bobbed their heads to Mr. Gray, who stepped forward and cordially shook hands with each man, as he said:

"I am very glad to know you all; and I hope

and trust we shall soon understand each other."

And to Mr. Gray's credit be it recorded that he courageously walked up to Isaac, and restored the keys of the belfry, simply observing:

"I take this opportunity of restoring your keys."

NOTES.

NOTE A.

"'DARTMOOR,' so named from the Dart, to which it gives rise, as it does to most of the rivers in Devon, constitutes the south-west part of the county on the north of the 'South Hams.' On approaching this tract from the south and south-east, the eye is bewildered by an extensive waste, exhibiting gigantic Tors, large surfaces covered with vast masses of scattered granite and immense rocks, which seem to have been precipitated from deep declivities into valleys. These huge fragments, spread in wild confusion over the ground, have been compared to the ponderous masses ejected by volcanoes, to the enormous ruins of formidable castles, and to the wrecks of mountains torn piecemeal by the raging elements.

"'Dartmoor,' and the waste called the 'Forest of Dartmoor,' include between two and three hundred thousand acres of open and uncultivated land. Of these, Dartmoor alone is supposed to comprise upwards of eighty thousand.

Swampy declivities, unfit for cultivation, also abound in many parts of this district."—*From "The History of Devonshire," by the Rev. Thomas Moore.*

"Dartmoor is hallowed by the most interesting associations; and forms of beauty and of grandeur everywhere meet the eye of a close observer of nature. The purple heathbell springs up beneath his feet—the variegated lichen encrusts the shivered rock—the creeping moss sheds a loveliness over the moist hill-side—the fern waves gracefully in the passing wind—the spiral foxglove displays its sparkled bosom—the tall reed, and the glossy plumes of the cotton rush, nod in the same breeze that wafts along the delicate thistle-down—the torrent fills the glen with romantic music—the mountain bee hums his soothing lullaby, and the song of many a melodious bird echoes sweetly amid the frowning crags. He, however, who wishes to behold the moorland in its utmost magnificence should visit it when the wintry gale is fiercely howling around—when the Tors are clothed in the majesty of the tempest—when the murmur of every little brook is swollen into a voice of power—when the lightnings have unbound their 'blue and arrowy pinions,' and he who dares, at that fearful hour, to confront the angry spirits of the storm in this their hereditary and undisputed stronghold, will be amply rewarded for his perils by the feelings of grandeur and sublimity which will then steal into his mind.

"Dartmoor, both above and below the surface, abounds

in enormous blocks of granite; and those which are scattered on its mighty slopes, exposed to the influence of the elements, and the ravages of time, are mouldered into the wildest and most impressible forms imaginable. In some places they are piled on each other with a regularity which seems almost the effect of art, and it requires but very slight aid from fancy to make them resume the most interesting resemblances. The poet will picture to himself the remains of sublunary grandeur—will muse amid fallen columns and shattered arches, and sigh over the bygone renown of fabrics which have passed away from the face of the earth, even as a flower withereth;—the antiquary will image ruined castles lifting high their tottering turrets, and crumbling abbeys, with their wind-swept aisles and mouldering cloisters; or he will recognize the relics of a remoter age in the semblance of moss-grown cromlechs and druidical monuments;—the moralist, in contemplating the rude scene, will be reminded of the awful wrecks of human ambition; and the misanthrope will exult in the solitude of spots where he may indulge his gloomy imaginings undisturbed."—"*Dartmoor, a Descriptive Poem,*" *by N. J. Carrington.*

The notes are taken from the preface to the second edition by H. E. Carrington.

Note B.

"Soule Bell."—"And when any is passing out of this life, a bell shall be tolled, and the minister shall not then

slack to do his last duty. And after the party's death, if it so fall out, there shall be rung no more than one short peal, and one other before the burial, and one other after the burial."—*Canon* 67 (1603), 4.

NOTE C.

"PASSING-BELL."—"Passing from life, sometimes called the "soul-bell," rung that others might pray for the person then dying. The passing-bell continued in this use all over England until the reign of Charles the Second. Now, it means, generally in the rural districts, some person is dead."

NOTE D.

"TOR."—"The Rev. J. H. Mason, the worthy incumbent of Widdicoombe-on-the-Moor, and Mr. Shillibear, of Walkhampton, persons better acquainted with Dartmoor than, perhaps, any other men living, state the most remarkable Tors to be, in the north, Cosdon, Little Hound, Great Hound, Stuperton, Wild, Watern, Kit, Far, Brat, Hamster, South Lynx, North Lynx, Dunnagoat, Stenger, Rough, High Willow, The Three Mill, Yes, Arm, and Belston Tors. In the east sixteen Tors, among which is Crockern, or Tinner's Parliament. In the south six; and in the west thirteen. Colonel Mudge, in his Trigonometrical Survey of Devon, enumerates many more; but of the whole it has been found impracticable to gather particulars; although, in the language of Lucan, 'Nullum est sine nomine saxum;' but, as to the larger proportion, that is all. They

have braved the elements and ruthless Time ever since the deluge; but their frames and the adamantine materials of which they are composed alone survive. In strictness, but comparatively few of them, and those mostly the Tors named by Mr. Mason and Mr. Shillibear, are on the moor; the others lie at a greater or less distance all round it.

"The Rev. Mr. Jones, in his interesting observations on Moretonhampstead and Dartmoor, eloquently describes Hound Tor as 'a magnificent group of rocks, like the remains of some ruined castle, rising in the horizon with its beetling front from the dreary plain; its toppling crags having the appearance of pinnacles which the hand of time had loosened; and, as it throws its dark shade across the heath, it increases the natural wildness of the desolate downs, in the midst of which it is situated.'

"'Fox Tor' has been connected by tradition with 'Child the Hunter.' Some of the Tors, as Hey or High Tor, South Brent Tor, were formerly beacons or 'fire towers,' which the word 'Tor' itself, in the Celtic and other languages implies; and anciently there were watchings and wardings of the beacons. The Rev. Mr. Polwhele imagines some of them to be extinct volcanoes; but this is not supported by facts, although there are, certainly, a few Tors of a conical shape. With much more probability certain of them, as Lynx, Bear, and Hound Tors, are so called from the respective animals of those names."—*From Carrington's "Dartmoor."*

NOTE E.

"CROCKERN TOR."—"This Tor, so well known to antiquaries, though few of them, perhaps, have seen it, stands at the back of a cottage and estate belonging to the Rev. J. H. Mason, about a mile distant from "Two Bridges," in the east quarter of the moor, of which it is reputed by some to be the centre. The president, or judge's chair, part of the bench for the jurors, and three irregular steps for ascending, are still partially visible; but, either by the course of time or spoliation, it has become dilapidated, and report affirms the latter.

"Crockern Tor must always command respect as an interesting relic of old British manners, and as a memorial of the Saxon 'Witena-gemote,' or early parliament of the realm, which, like the Stannary parliament, as it is most commonly styled, was held in the open air."

NOTE F.

"WISTMAN'S WOOD."—"Tradition relates that Wistman's, otherwise Welshman's Wood, was planted by the renowned Isabella de Fortibus, Countess of Devon."—*From Carrington's "Dartmoor."*

"This solitary relic, as it is supposed to be by many, of the woods formerly existing on the moor, stands on a slope near the West Dart, on the north-west of Crockern Tor, a mile or more above Two Bridges, and consists of scrub, or dwarf trees, chiefly oak, whose stunted roots, finding scarcely a covering in the thin granite soil, or being entirely

exposed on the bare surface of the rocks, obtain in such a situation little nutriment for their support. There are several patches of wood near each other, covering an extent of several acres. The trees seldom exceed ten feet in height; the branches are long and straggling, nor are their trunks large, although, from the vast accumulation of moss, together with thorns, brambles, and other parasites, they have assumed a bulky appearance. Unpropitious, however, as the situation of the wood unquestionably is, it has withstood the tempests of the moor and the disasters of its climate many centuries:—it is supposed to be a thousand years old."—*From the "History of Devonshire," by the Rev. Thomas Moore.*

NOTE G.

"SAINT DAYS."—"Bells wake the heart to gladness on all the Holy Feast days of the Church, loudly calling upon us to 'rejoice in the Lord.'"—*Blunt, "On the Use and Abuse of Church Bells."*

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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